A week in the life of the world | *Global edition*
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The Guardian Weekly

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Eyewitness
Senegal

PHOTOGRAPH: NICOLAS RÉMÉNÉ/AFP/GETTY

Sweeping through
Kumpos, a traditional figure and dance from the Jola people of the Casamance region of Senegal and the Gambia, is performed on Malibu beach in the Guédiawaye district of Dakar, as part of the Herds public art and climate action project, which aims to cross about 10 countries between central Africa and the Arctic by August.

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Guardian Weekly is an edited selection of some of the best journalism found in the Guardian's digital editions in the UK, US and Australia, and the Guardian newspaper in the UK. The weekly magazine has an international focus and four editions: global, Europe, Australia and North America.
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Ownership of the Observer was transferred from Guardian News & Media Limited to Tortoise Media Limited in April 2025. From this edition, the Guardian Weekly will no longer feature Observer journalism, but all the in-depth news, analysis, features, long reads and opinion you'd expect from the Guardian website and newspaper will still be in the magazine every week.

On the cover A brazen attack in Kashmir that killed 26 tourists has sent relations between India and Pakistan into a downward spin. The nuclear-armed neighbours have fought two wars over Muslim-majority Kashmir, which is divided between them but claimed fully by both. As public fury in India rages over the attacks, can politicians find a way to dial down tensions? *Illustration: Sébastien Thibault*

Global report

Headlines from the last seven days

1 UKRAINE/RUSSIA

Putin declares a three-day truce for Victory Day

Vladimir Putin declared a three-day full ceasefire in the war with Ukraine from 8 May to mark the 80th anniversary of the victory of the Soviet Union in the second world war. The Kremlin called on Ukraine to join it as well. In response Kyiv called for an immediate month-long ceasefire.

Putin, in his statement, also said he was ready to engage constructively with international partners to address the "root causes" of the conflict.

If respected by both sides, the May ceasefire would mark the first full ceasefire since the start of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine more than three years ago. However, the temporary nature of the truce suggests that US efforts to broker a broader peace deal remain elusive.

Commentators suggested the offer was a move to avoid the possibility of Ukrainian long-range drones disrupting the Red Square Victory Day parade. They added that the unilateral move was clearly directed at the White House. It follows Donald Trump's one-on-one meeting with Volodymyr Zelenskyy in Rome at the pope's funeral - hailed by both sides as "constructive".

The big story *Page 10 →*

2 CANADA

Vancouver attack suspect charged after 11 killed

The suspect in a car-ramming attack that killed 11 people and injured dozens at a Filipino festival in Vancouver was charged last Sunday with eight counts of second-degree murder. More charges were possible against Kai-Ji Adam Lo, 30, the British Columbia prosecution service said. Investigators ruled out terrorism and said Lo had a history of mental health issues.

Prime minister Mark Carney met members of the Filipino community, lighting candles and laying bouquets for the victims, including at a memorial near the scene of the attack. Just two days ahead of a national election, Carney said the attack had left the country "shocked, devastated and heartbroken".

Spotlight *Page 33 →*

3 UNITED STATES

Pritzker's fiery speech ignites Democratic talk

Illinois's Democratic governor, JB Pritzker, scorched Donald Trump's administration, calling for "mass protests" and declaring that Republicans "cannot know a moment of peace" during a fiery speech in New Hampshire that immediately sparked speculation over his political ambitions. "It's time to fight everywhere and all at once," Pritzker said to a ballroom filled with Democratic activists, officials and donors.

The billionaire heir to the Hyatt hotel fortune's address marked the first major foray by a potential 2028 presidential contender into an early primary state.

4 PORTUGAL/SPAIN

Extreme weather blamed for huge power outage

Electricity was restored to nearly 90% of mainland Spain by early on Tuesday after tens of millions of people across Spain and Portugal were plunged into a huge power blackout on Monday. The outage, blamed by the Portuguese operator REN on extreme temperature variations, left people without trains, metros, traffic lights, ATMs, phone connections and internet access.

Power was restored overnight to around 6.2m households in Portugal out of 6.5m, according to the national electricity grid operator. Lights also came on again in Madrid and in Lisbon.

Barely a corner of the peninsula, which has a joint population of almost 60 million people, escaped the blackout. But no firm cause for the shutdown has yet emerged.

The Portuguese prime minister, Luís Montenegro, said the source of the outage was "probably in Spain". Spain's prime minister, Pedro Sánchez, said that all the potential causes were being analysed and warned the public not to speculate because of the risk of "misinformation".

5 UNITED STATES

California becomes world's fourth largest economy

California's economy surpassed Japan's, making the state with a population of nearly 40 million the fourth largest economy, Governor Gavin Newsom said.

The state's nominal GDP reached $4.1tn, according to data from the International Monetary Fund and the US Bureau of Economic Analysis, edging out Japan's $4.02tn nominal GDP. California now ranks behind the US at $29.18tn, China at $18.74tn and Germany at $4.65tn. California outperformed the world's top economies with a growth rate in 2024 of 6%, compared with the US's 5.3%.

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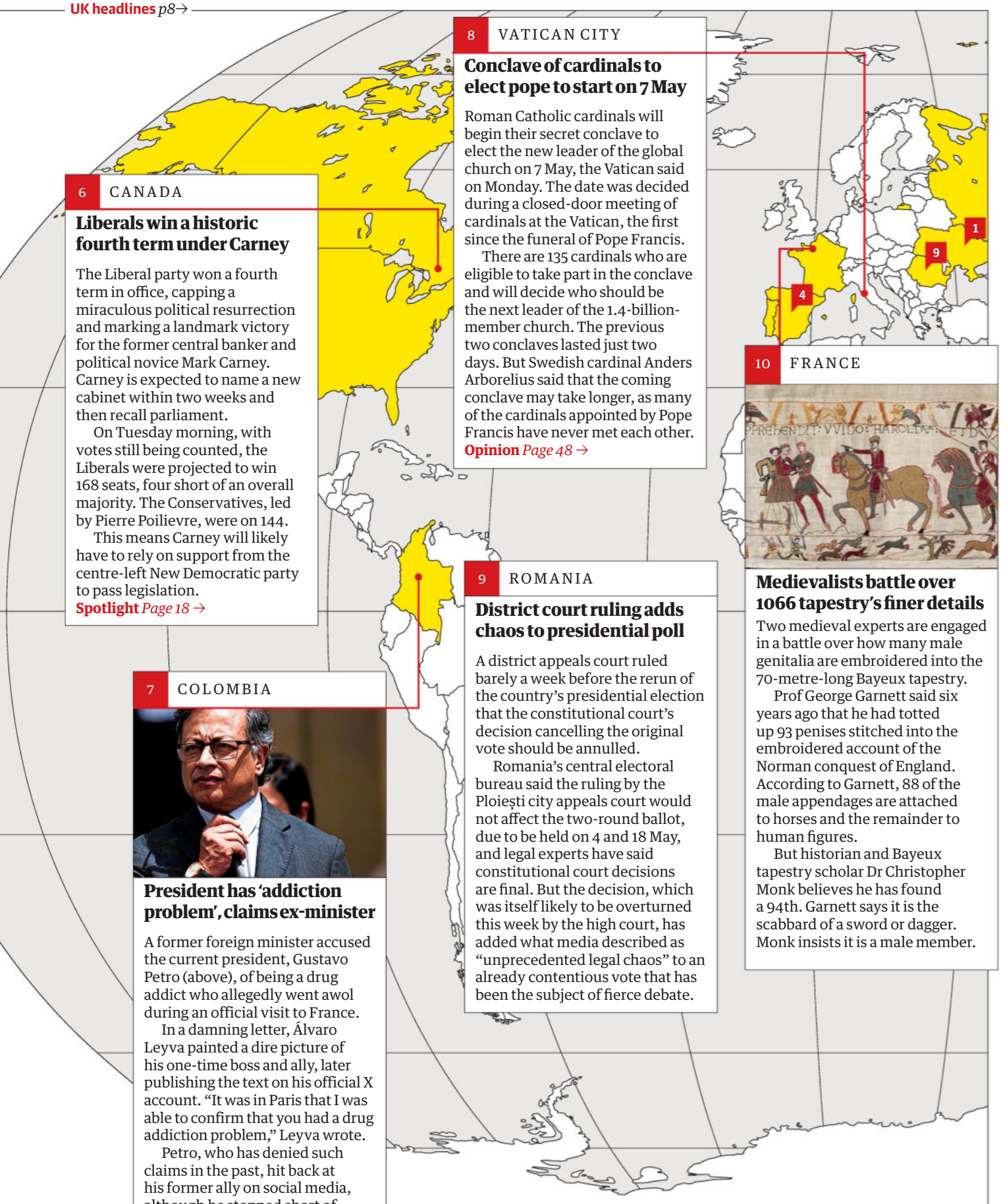


8 VATICAN CITY

Conclave of cardinals to elect pope to start on 7 May

Roman Catholic cardinals will begin their secret conclave to elect the new leader of the global church on 7 May, the Vatican said on Monday. The date was decided during a closed-door meeting of cardinals at the Vatican, the first since the funeral of Pope Francis.

There are 135 cardinals who are eligible to take part in the conclave and will decide who should be the next leader of the 1.4-billion-member church. The previous two conclaves lasted just two days. But Swedish cardinal Anders Arborelius said that the coming conclave may take longer, as many of the cardinals appointed by Pope Francis have never met each other.

Opinion *Page 48* →

6 CANADA

Liberals win a historic fourth term under Carney

The Liberal party won a fourth term in office, capping a miraculous political resurrection and marking a landmark victory for the former central banker and political novice Mark Carney. Carney is expected to name a new cabinet within two weeks and then recall parliament.

On Tuesday morning, with votes still being counted, the Liberals were projected to win 168 seats, four short of an overall majority. The Conservatives, led by Pierre Poilievre, were on 144.

This means Carney will likely have to rely on support from the centre-left New Democratic party to pass legislation.

Spotlight *Page 18* →

10 FRANCE

Medievalists battle over 1066 tapestry's finer details

Two medieval experts are engaged in a battle over how many male genitalia are embroidered into the 70-metre-long Bayeux tapestry.

Prof George Garnett said six years ago that he had totted up 93 penises stitched into the embroidered account of the Norman conquest of England. According to Garnett, 88 of the male appendages are attached to horses and the remainder to human figures.

But historian and Bayeux tapestry scholar Dr Christopher Monk believes he has found a 94th. Garnett says it is the scabbard of a sword or dagger. Monk insists it is a male member.

9 ROMANIA

District court ruling adds chaos to presidential poll

A district appeals court ruled barely a week before the rerun of the country's presidential election that the constitutional court's decision cancelling the original vote should be annulled.

Romania's central electoral bureau said the ruling by the Ploiești city appeals court would not affect the two-round ballot, due to be held on 4 and 18 May, and legal experts have said constitutional court decisions are final. But the decision, which was itself likely to be overturned this week by the high court, has added what media described as "unprecedented legal chaos" to an already contentious vote that has been the subject of fierce debate.

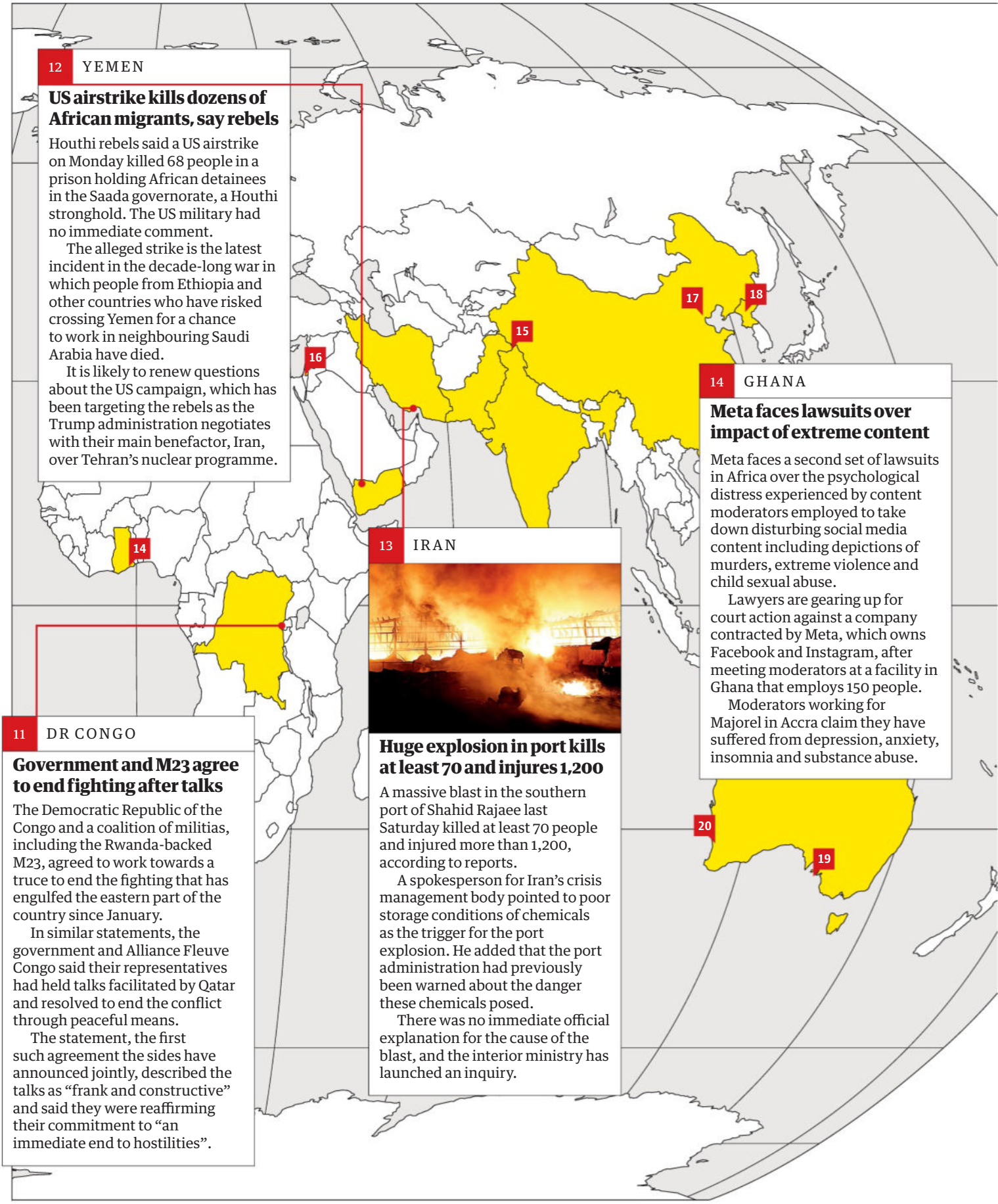
7 COLOMBIA

President has 'addiction problem', claims ex-minister

A former foreign minister accused the current president, Gustavo Petro (above), of being a drug addict who allegedly went awol during an official visit to France.

In a damning letter, Álvaro Leyva painted a dire picture of his one-time boss and ally, later publishing the text on his official X account. "It was in Paris that I was able to confirm that you had a drug addiction problem," Leyva wrote.

Petro, who has denied such claims in the past, hit back at his former ally on social media, although he stopped short of denying the accusation.



12 YEMEN

US airstrike kills dozens of African migrants, say rebels

Houthi rebels said a US airstrike on Monday killed 68 people in a prison holding African detainees in the Saada governorate, a Houthi stronghold. The US military had no immediate comment.

The alleged strike is the latest incident in the decade-long war in which people from Ethiopia and other countries who have risked crossing Yemen for a chance to work in neighbouring Saudi Arabia have died.

It is likely to renew questions about the US campaign, which has been targeting the rebels as the Trump administration negotiates with their main benefactor, Iran, over Tehran's nuclear programme.

13 IRAN

Huge explosion in port kills at least 70 and injures 1,200

A massive blast in the southern port of Shahid Rajaee last Saturday killed at least 70 people and injured more than 1,200, according to reports.

A spokesperson for Iran's crisis management body pointed to poor storage conditions of chemicals as the trigger for the port explosion. He added that the port administration had previously been warned about the danger these chemicals posed.

There was no immediate official explanation for the cause of the blast, and the interior ministry has launched an inquiry.

14 GHANA

Meta faces lawsuits over impact of extreme content

Meta faces a second set of lawsuits in Africa over the psychological distress experienced by content moderators employed to take down disturbing social media content including depictions of murders, extreme violence and child sexual abuse.

Lawyers are gearing up for court action against a company contracted by Meta, which owns Facebook and Instagram, after meeting moderators at a facility in Ghana that employs 150 people.

Moderators working for Majorel in Accra claim they have suffered from depression, anxiety, insomnia and substance abuse.

11 DR CONGO

Government and M23 agree to end fighting after talks

The Democratic Republic of the Congo and a coalition of militias, including the Rwanda-backed M23, agreed to work towards a truce to end the fighting that has engulfed the eastern part of the country since January.

In similar statements, the government and Alliance Fleuve Congo said their representatives had held talks facilitated by Qatar and resolved to end the conflict through peaceful means.

The statement, the first such agreement the sides have announced jointly, described the talks as "frank and constructive" and said they were reaffirming their commitment to "an immediate end to hostilities".

Global report

15 INDIA/PAKISTAN

Navy test-fires missiles as tensions rise over Kashmir

India's navy test-fired missiles last Sunday, showcasing its ability to carry out "long-range, precision offensive" strikes, as tensions with Pakistan rise after last week's terrorist attack in Indian-administered Kashmir that killed 26 civilians.

Narendra Modi, India's prime minister, who has been briefing world leaders to build support, said in his monthly radio address that every Indian's blood was "on the boil". The missiles launched are designed for powerful, long-range, high-precision strikes.

Pakistan's railway minister, Hanif Abbasi, said at the weekend that the country's nuclear arsenal of more than 130 missiles was "not kept as models" and was aimed "only for India".

Spotlight *Page 15* →

16 PALESTINE

Mahmoud Abbas names aide as likely successor

President Mahmoud Abbas named a veteran aide and confidant as his new vice-president. It was seen as a major step by the ageing leader to designate a successor.

The appointment of Hussein al-Sheikh as vice-president of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) does not guarantee he will be the next Palestinian president. But it makes him the frontrunner in the dominant Fatah party.

The move is unlikely to boost the image among many Palestinians of Fatah as a closed and corrupt movement out of touch with the public.

Spotlight *Page 23* →

17 CHINA

Xi unveils plan to counter impact of US trade war

Xi Jinping announced a plan to counter China's continuing economic problems and the impact of the US trade war, as reports swirl that it could drop tariffs on some US products, including semiconductors.

A report of last Friday's politburo meeting published by the official state media outlet Xinhua said Beijing would "work with the international community to actively uphold multilateralism and oppose unilateral bullying practices". It promised to increase low and middle incomes, develop the service industry and boost consumption. It stressed the need for more proactive macroeconomic policies, faster development of a new real estate model and increased housing stock, and "stepping up" city renewal programmes.

The US president again insisted that Xi has called him to discuss the border taxes.

Wen-ti Sung, a fellow at the Atlantic Council's Global China Hub, said the politburo's decisions showed Beijing was willing to take on high domestic inflation to weather the tariffs.

18 NORTH KOREA

Kim confirms his troops fought for Putin in Kursk

Vladimir Putin and Kim Jong-un confirmed for the first time that North Korea has sent troops to fight for Russia in the war with Ukraine, with the leaders describing the soldiers as "heroes".

The acknowledgment came amid claims by the Kremlin – contested by Ukraine – that North Korean forces helped recapture Russia's Kursk region. It followed months of silence over the deployment. The Kremlin also said Russia was ready to provide assistance to North Korea "similar to the support offered to its soldiers in the Kursk region".

The big story *Page 10* →

19 AUSTRALIA

Dachshund rescued after 529 days in the wilderness

Conservationists announced they had caught Valerie the miniature dachshund, who had been missing on Kangaroo Island. Australia's favourite fugitive had spent 529 days on the run.

People had been trying to find Valerie since she went missing in November 2023, when her owners, New South Wales couple Georgia Gardner and Josh Fishlock, were holidaying at Stokes Bay.

In March, reports began coming in that Valerie had been spotted. Kangala Wildlife Rescue volunteers used surveillance, traps and lures to try to find her. They captured a video of her, but she remained at large. After an estimated 1,000 hours of volunteer effort and more than 5,000km travelled searching for her, she was finally snared.

20 AUSTRALIA

Virginia Giuffre, Epstein victim, dies aged 41

Virginia Giuffre, one of the most prominent victims of the disgraced US financier Jeffrey Epstein who also alleged she had been sexually trafficked to Prince Andrew, died last Friday aged 41. Her family issued a statement confirming she took her own life at her farm in Western Australia.

In 2021, Giuffre filed a civil lawsuit against Prince Andrew in the federal court in New York, alleging he had sexually assaulted when she was 17. Andrew strongly denied the accusations. In 2022, Andrew and Giuffre agreed to an out-of-court settlement for an undisclosed sum.

DEATHS

Zurab Tsereteli
Georgian-Russian sculptor, known for his gigantic and often controversial monuments in Russia, the US and Europe. He died on 22 April, aged 91.

Jiggly Caliente
Filipino-American drag performer who gained fame after appearing in Ru Paul's Drag Race. She died on 27 April, aged 44.

Herbert Gans
German-born American sociologist and media analyst. He died on 21 April, aged 97.

David Thomas
US frontman of anarchic band Pere Ubu. He died on 23 April, aged 71.

Keith Stackpole
Australian cricketer who played in 43 Tests. He died on 22 April, aged 84.

EMPLOYMENT

EU ready to accept youth mobility proposal limits

The EU is ready to make major concessions in negotiations with London to allow British and European 18- to 30-year-olds to travel and work freely, potentially paving the way for a long-awaited reset with Brussels. A scheme that would allow thousands of young Europeans to live and work in the UK has been seen as a key EU demand in reaching a post-Brexit pact incorporating defence, energy and migration.

It is understood that EU member states could now be willing to limit work visas to 12 months, with quotas on numbers and restrictions on the sectors EU citizens could work in. They are also open to a "one in, one out" plan being considered by the home secretary. EU sources said the scheme would be rebranded the "youth experience" programme in order to eliminate any suggestion that it was reopening immigration routes for EU citizens. Asked about the prospect of a youth mobility scheme, a Downing Street spokesperson said: "Both sides are discussing a wide range of issues, which is entirely normal for a negotiation."

The EU first proposed a youth mobility scheme that would allow young people to work or study for up to four years in each other's countries in April 2024, but it was rejected by Labour and the Conservatives.

The UK already takes part in a youth mobility scheme, which allows people from 12 non-EU nations to work in the country for a two- or three-year period. Home Office data shows 23,000 young people came into the UK as part of the scheme in 2023.

CONSERVATIVES

'Don't panic' warning as party fears dire local polls

Senior Conservatives warned colleagues against "bloody panic", urging them not to consider doing deals with Reform or removing Kemi Badenoch as leader, as the party braced for a disastrous set of local election results this week.

Divisions were apparent ahead of the 1 May elections in which the party was expected to lose hundreds of council seats. Ben Houchen, the Tees Valley mayor, suggested a pact with Reform and the shadow justice secretary, Robert Jenrick, also said he wanted to bring together a coalition of the right, though he insisted he was not talking about a deal with Nigel Farage's party. There have been rumours about Tory MPs submitting letters of no confidence if the results are a wipeout.

LAW

Cyclists could face life in jail for killing pedestrians

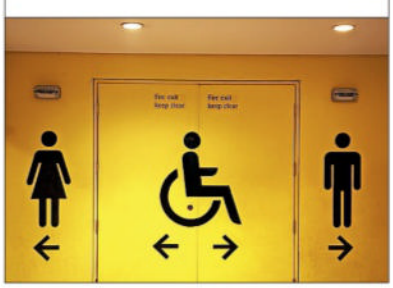
Cyclists who kill pedestrians by dangerous cycling could face life imprisonment in England and Wales under amendments to the crime and policing bill that would bring the offence into line with driving laws. At present the usual punishment is a maximum two-year jail term. A planned change to remove a loophole from the 1860s was derailed last year by the general election.

TRANSGENDER

Equalities body issues update on public facilities

In an interim update on how a supreme court ruling that the terms "woman" and "sex" in the Equality Act referred only to a biological woman and to biological sex should be interpreted, the Equality and Human Rights Commission said that in workplaces and services open to the public "trans women (biological men) should not be permitted to use the women's facilities and trans men (biological women) should not be permitted to use the men's facilities".

The interim advice from the equalities watchdog comes ahead of updated guidance and a code of practice expected by the summer.



INDUSTRY

Coal and ore secured to fuel Scunthorpe 'for months'

Steelmaking at Scunthorpe will continue for months, the government said, after it confirmed that a shipment of more than 55,000 tonnes of coking coal had arrived in the UK. The shipment, which landed at the Immingham bulk terminal on the Humber River on Sunday, arrived just over a fortnight after ministers recalled parliament to approve emergency legislation to take control of the site and continue production amid fears that British Steel's Chinese owner, Jingye, planned to let the furnaces run cold.

The coke was imported from Bluescope Steel's plant in Australia. Another shipment of more than 66,000 tonnes of iron ore pellets and 27,000 tonnes of iron ore fines, a lower-grade source of iron, was due to arrive from Sweden this week. British Steel scrapped a consultation plan on making up to 2,700 steelworkers redundant that Jingye launched after it proposed closing Scunthorpe's two blast furnaces.

41

Number of world records broken at last weekend's London marathon. Ethiopian Tigst Assefa won the women's elite race in a new record time of 2hr 15min 50sec. Others included the most marathons run in a 3D costume (male), fastest dressed as a traffic cone (male), and fastest dressed as a rotating puzzle cube (female)

Reader's eyewitness

Lucky sip

'I caught this butterfly drinking in the spring nectar at the Idle Valley Nature Reserve in Retford, Nottinghamshire, where I was testing out my new camera.' *By Helena Gardiner, London, England, UK*

SCIENCE AND ENVIRONMENT

GEOENGINEERING

Controversial outdoor tests could slow climate crisis harm

Scientists are to launch outdoor geoengineering experiments as part of a programme under the auspices of the Advanced Research and Invention Agency, the UK government agency to provide "critical" data needed to assess the potential of the technology.

Geoengineering is controversial, and most proposals aim to block sunlight reaching the Earth's surface, for example by launching clouds of reflective particles into the atmosphere. If successful, this could temporarily reduce surface temperatures and the harm the climate crisis is causing, giving more time for the deep cuts in global carbon emissions needed. Backers of solar geoengineering say research is vital in case an emergency brake is needed. However, solar radiation management could have serious unintended consequences, such as shifting rains vital to food production.

MEDICAL RESEARCH

Non-hormonal contraceptive male implant 'lasts two years'

Adam, an implantable, non-hormonal male contraceptive, has been shown in trials to last for at least two years. It is a water-soluble hydrogel that is implanted in the sperm ducts, preventing sperm from mixing with semen.

The company behind the product, Contraline, says the approach offers a reversible alternative to condoms and vasectomies. Details of Contraline's phase 1 clinical trial revealed Adam can block the release of sperm for 24 months.

ALLERGIES

Daily peanut exposure can desensitise allergic adults

Adults with severe peanut allergies can be desensitised by daily exposure, according to the first clinical trial of its kind. After being given steadily increasing doses of peanut flour over a period of months, two-thirds of the trial participants, aged between 18 and 40, were able to eat the equivalent of five peanuts without reacting.

The findings, published in the journal Allergy, suggest the window of opportunity for treating allergies could extend into adulthood, raising the prospect of new treatments for those severely affected.

80%

Proportion of coral reefs that have been hit by a mass bleaching event that began in 2023. Reefs in at least 82 countries and territories have been exposed to enough heat to turn corals white, data from Coral Reef Watch shows

PALAEONTOLOGY

Giant prehistoric kangaroos 'preferred to chill at home'

Protemnodons, a species of prehistoric giant kangaroos from a site in Queensland, Australia, were probably homebodies with a small range compared with other kangaroos, according to research published in the journal Plos One.

Protemnodon, which lived on the Australian continent between 5m and 40,000 years ago, weighed up to 170kg, making them more than twice as heavy as the largest red kangaroo. Analysis of fossil teeth revealed they lived and died near the caves where their remains were found.

Dr Scott Hocknull, a vertebrate palaeontologist and senior curator at the Queensland Museum, said the individuals stayed within "a tiny pocket". "These gigantic kangaroos were just chilling at home, eating the rainforest leaves, because there were heaps of them around," he said.

‘I haven’t slept for days’ Kharkiv residents reel under drone strikes

While US-led peace negotiations threaten to carve up Ukraine, deadly Russian attacks continue – such as those on the country’s second city last week – amid deep cynicism about the process

Still smouldering remains of a former soap factory and scattered children's shoes inside a charity building both hit during Russian drone strikes on Kharkiv

UKRAINE

By *Luke Harding* KHARKIV

Photographs by Julia Kochetova

ABOUT 1AM LAST FRIDAY, Yuliia Verbytska woke to the sound of an air raid siren. She grabbed her children - Dmitry, 17, and Olexiy, 12 - and sat in the corridor, checking her phone. In the sky above came an ominous whine. Minutes later, a Russian drone crashed into the disused soap factory down the road in Polyova Street. There was an enormous explosion.

"We don't have a shelter in our building, so we hide behind two concrete walls. All the neighbours sit together. You wonder if this is your last moment," she said. The raid followed a massive attack a day earlier on Verbytska's home, Ukraine's second city, Kharkiv, and on the capital, Kyiv, where 12 people were killed. "I haven't slept for two days," she said wearily.

Exhausted residents sweeping up glass and fixing broken panels pointed out that the latest attack came hours after a post from Donald Trump on social media. It said: "Vladimir, STOP." Russia's president, it seemed, had ignored Trump's rare rebuke. Despite peace negotiations and an appeal by Ukraine's president, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, for a month-long ceasefire, the Russians were bombing as usual.

One of the damaged buildings belongs to a charity, Heart of Kharkiv, where Verbytska volunteers. Bits of concrete fell amid clothes and shoes. Children's drawings were blown from a noticeboard. The charity's wheelchairs and pushchairs survived unscathed. "I don't believe in promises or words. Not from Trump or anybody else. I don't really have much faith in anything any more," Verbytska said gloomily.

By late morning, emergency service workers were still extinguishing small blazes in the now-ruined factory. Built in 1918, it once made soap for the Soviet Union. It went bankrupt last year. The Kremlin's drones had flattened a brick administration building. Firefighters doused charred beams among piles of twisted metal. →

▲ A visitor to the Heart of Kharkiv charity collects a wheelchair (left). Firefighters at work in the aftermath of the drone hit on the former soap factory (right)

"They are fascists. Inhuman people. Barbarians. Cruel," the complex's security guard, Anton, said when asked about Russians. "They want to destroy Ukraine and Ukrainians." He was sceptical that the peace process – Trump's special envoy Steve Witkoff held talks last Friday with Putin in Moscow – would lead to a settlement that might end the fighting.

Anton said Zelenskyy would be unwise to accept the US's latest leaked proposal. It envisages handing Crimea and four other Ukrainian regions to Russia. Ukraine gets back a sliver of territory in the Kharkiv region. "Today it's five *oblasts*. Tomorrow, the Russians will demand another five. Zelenskyy should not sign," he said. He dismissed Trump as a "Russian agent recruited long ago", and said: "I'm disappointed the Americans elected him."

Russia says its devastating attacks are against Ukrainian military objects. Its latest murderous barrage follows a double strike last month on the north-eastern city of Sumy, which killed 35 people. Most were travelling on a bus when an Iskander missile exploded next to them. Overwhelmingly, the victims of Russia's air raids are civilians. They include two children killed last Thursday and dug from the rubble of their Kyiv apartment block.

▼ Emergency workers inspect the damage at a former soap factory in Kharkiv

Liudmyla Hanzii, a pensioner, was at her home in Kharkiv's Slobidsky district when the soap factory was hit. Her son, Andriy, showed off the bed where she had been sleeping. It was decorated with icons and a black-and-white photograph of Liudmyla as a young woman. "Mum heard a bang. All the glass came flying in. A teenage boy living next door dragged her out," he said, adding she was being treated in hospital for minor injuries.

Anatoliy Yaskovets, the deputy head of Kharkiv fire station No 6, said Russia has stepped up its air attacks. The frequency increased in January, he said, when Trump came back as US president. Apart from a brief pause when Putin announced an Easter ceasefire, bombing was continuous. "It's terror against the civilian population. There's no time to react. It takes 50 seconds for a missile fired from Belgorod in Russia to arrive," he said.

The Russians had recently changed tactics, he added. They now send a swarm of drones, one after another, at the same target. Three of his colleagues were killed last year when they went to the scene of a drone strike. A second drone incinerated their vehicle 20 minutes later. Moscow was using drones to drop CS gas and delayed-action grenades, which detonate up to an hour after impact. They go off if touched, he said.

Asked if he thought the war might end soon, Yaskovets answered: "Probably not." He continued: "People are tired. There are air raid sirens all the time. It's a psychological burden. Russia has been destroying our power stations and industrial infrastructure. The aim is to make people unhappy so they turn on Ukraine's government."

In February 2022, Russian armoured columns tried to seize Kharkiv. There was fierce fighting. Ukrainian units pushed the enemy back to the city's edge. For the next six months, Kharkiv was repeatedly shelled. That autumn, a Ukrainian counteroffensive liberated most of the surrounding province. In recent months, though, the Russians have been advancing again, reoccupying the border town of Vovchansk last year, and swallowing villages.

How far could they go? Yaskovets said it was clear the Russians would try again to encircle and occupy Kharkiv. "Putin doesn't intend to stop. He wants to take the south of Ukraine and go as far as the Dnipro River. He doesn't have a big enough army to do that," he suggested. In the meantime, there would be more drone attacks, and more casualties. "We've had four years of full-scale war. Somehow, people have got used to it," he noted.

A group of soldiers from the Kraken regiment – breaking off for coffee at a Kharkiv petrol station – said Putin's behaviour last week was not surprising. "By bombing us, he shows his true nature," one of them, Saifula, said. He added: "My feeling is that Trump is not really a president at all. He's a parody or a clone of a president. The whole world is laughing at him. Our only option now is to have a strong army and to carry on fighting."

LUKE HARDING IS A GUARDIAN INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENT

DIPLOMACY

When in Rome
The meaning of Trump's meeting with Zelenskyy

The US president may or may not have had an epiphany about Putin – but the optics were dramatic nonetheless

By *Andrew Roth* WASHINGTON

IT WAS A FITTING MOMENT for an epiphany, if that's what this was. Donald Trump sat in the morning light in St Peter's Basilica hunched over in conversation with Volodymyr Zelenskyy, as the assembled royalty and foreign leaders, the cardinals and bishops, and thousands of faithful gathered outside to prepare for the papal funeral.

His revelation soon came in the guise of a Truth Social post. "There was no reason for Putin to be shooting missiles into civilian areas, cities and towns, over the last few days," Trump said. "It makes me think that maybe [Putin] doesn't want to stop the war."

For months, Zelenskyy and European leaders have struggled to deliver that message to Trump. Now, in part thanks to Trump's unlikely pilgrimage to the Vatican for Pope Francis's funeral, they may see new hope.

This could, of course, all come to naught. The US president is notoriously mercurial. His thinking may change the next time he speaks with Vladimir Putin, or with one of his own advisers deeply sceptical of Ukraine. Trump's post mentioning Putin was mainly dedicated to attacking the New York Times' White House correspondent, whom he derided as "liddle" and a "very biased and untalented writer". And Trump left the Vatican before a second meeting with Zelenskyy was supposed to take place.

And yet that one face-to-face with Zelenskyy may leave its mark. The photographs released from the summit were dramatic: the two men sat alone in simple chairs in front of a mosaic of Jesus being baptised in the river Jordan. Keith Kellogg, Trump's envoy to Ukraine, felt compelled to quote the book of Matthew. "Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the children of God," he wrote.

It was a "very symbolic meeting", Zelenskyy said later, and it had the "potential to become historic, if we achieve joint results". Zelenskyy, dressed in an all-black outfit that could be termed funereal military chic, was applauded by the crowd as he walked out on to St Peter's Square.

It was something of a miracle that the summit happened at all. Trump and Zelenskyy hadn't been in the same room since the Oval Office meltdown when Trump said Zelenskyy was "disrespectful" and "gambling with world war three". Trump's first trip abroad was meant to be a visit to Saudi Arabia in May. And it wasn't clear a meeting would act in Zelenskyy's favour – advisers suggested he should use European leaders as mediators because their relationship was too volatile.

And it could have gone far worse. As Trump arrived at St Peter's Square last Saturday morning, there were numerous reminders of the great rift that has opened between the US and its friends in Europe, largely prompted by an America First platform that has tested the transatlantic alliance.

Trump and his wife, Melania, stood among other leaders behind the world royalty as Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re read a homily that seemed to nod at the tensions between Trump and the late pontiff, particularly over the White House policies on migration and deportations.

"'Build bridges, not walls' was an exhortation he repeated many times," Re said during his homily. "His gestures and exhortations in favour of refugees and displaced persons are countless. His insistence on working on behalf of the poor was constant."

At moments, the funeral seemed tailored to trigger the Maga faithful. The final group of mourners to pay their respects to the late pope were the "poor and marginalised people", including homeless, prisoners, migrants and transgender people, the Vatican said.

And yet, in a rare moment of western cohesion, cooler heads prevailed and Ukraine's leader was able to sit down with the president of the country's most important ally. Whether the symbolism of Trump and Zelenskyy's Vatican summit will translate into policy remains to be seen.

ANDREW ROTH IS THE GUARDIAN'S GLOBAL AFFAIRS CORRESPONDENT

This could of course all come to naught. Trump's thinking may change at any time

▼ Donald Trump and Volodymyr Zelenskyy held a meeting at the pope's funeral

UKRAINIAN PRESIDENTIAL PRESS OFF/UPI/REX/SHUTTERSTOCK

ANALYSIS

Crimea and punishment
Trump's mooted peace plan puts burden on Kyiv

By *Dan Sabbagh*

"Crimea will stay with Russia," Donald Trump told Time magazine in a largely sympathetic profile last Friday. And with that statement, the US president made clear that he wanted to carve up another country, Ukraine, and so legitimise the forcible seizure of land made by Moscow 11 years ago.

From reading the transcript of the interview, Trump's thinking is hardly coherent. Crimea, he says, wouldn't have been seized if he had been president in 2014, but "it was handed to them by Barack Hussein Obama" and now Crimea has "been with them [Russia] for a long time" – so it is time to accept the seizure.

The president does not even pursue the argument that a recognition of Russia's occupation of Crimea is a necessary price of ending Russian military assault on Ukraine, though perhaps he thinks it – and instead the reporters move the conversation on to discussing Trump's aspirations for annexing Greenland and Canada. "The only way this thing really works is for Canada to become a state," he added.

Wars seldom end satisfactorily. The struggle, violence and sacrifice often does not bear the promised fruit. Invaded suddenly by Russia, Ukraine fought off the capture of Kyiv and existential collapse in the spring, summer and autumn of 2022 but has been unable to expel the attackers since, leaving Kyiv facing the reality of Russia occupying about 18% of its territory.

But the proposed US settlement term sheet – now in the public domain and verified by Trump's comments about Crimea – is redolent of great power thinking at the end of previous wars: the carve-ups of Versailles in 1919, where a country that was only narrowly defeated was treated as if it were conquered, or Potsdam in 1945, which divided Europe into west and east.

Ukraine's own peace plan – an older version of which was also leaked last Friday – tries a different tack: a full ceasefire on the current frontlines first, then a discussion about territories later. It is not the conversation the US or Russia want to have, but Kyiv argues, with European support, that peace should be rooted in international law, not capitulation.

The difficulty for Kyiv is, first, that it is the US proposing to give "de jure recognition of Russian control of Crimea" – so, a direct agreement with Russia. The second is that if Ukraine were determined to fight on, and hope that Trump would walk away, it risks losing military intelligence again – and the US may not sell Kyiv critical weapons such as Patriot air defence missiles.

Russia, meanwhile, is responding with a series of increasingly aggressive punishment bombings aimed at Ukrainian civilians.

This suggests a growing confidence that Russia will not be punished for starting a war, while Trump makes simple demands on social media for the war to stop. Last Thursday, the US president said "Vladimir, STOP!" after 12 were killed by Russian bombing in Kyiv, and he complained that "5,000 soldiers a week are dying" – an exaggeration and more importantly a false equivalence.

Western officials estimated that 250,000 Russian soldiers have been killed during the three-year invasion, their deaths often caused in crude infantry assaults ordered by Moscow's commanders against Ukraine's frontlines. Meanwhile, Kyiv acknowledged the deaths of 46,000 of its own troops in mid-February, so together the total military fatality rate is less than 2,000 a week.

For all the Russian aggression and the casualties it has caused, the proposed US peace terms say that while Ukraine should be compensated somehow, all sanctions on Russia going back to 2014 should be removed and Washington and Moscow should engage in "economic cooperation on energy and other industrial sectors". So not just a carve-up, but a rapprochement that Ukraine cannot prevent.

Peace discussions do more than end wars. They often set diplomatic standards for the period thereafter. Perhaps there will be last-minute changes, but the warmer tone of the US-Russia discussions compared with Trump's berating of Volodymyr Zelenskyy does not engender much hope. Ukraine's options – fight on and risk losing the US, or accept a formal loss of Crimea – are not attractive, even if the latter may pave the way to a ceasefire.

DAN SABBAGH IS THE GUARDIAN'S DEFENCE AND SECURITY EDITOR

◀ Vladimir Putin greets Steve Witkoff, Donald Trump's envoy, in Moscow
KREMLIN.RU/REUTERS

> ***"America's proposed settlement is redolent of the great power carve-ups of Versailles in 1919 or Potsdam in 1945***

ENVIRONMENT

The 89% of us who care about the climate

Page 24 →

Spotlight

People hold candles at a vigil in Bengaluru, India, for those killed in a deadly attack on tourists in Indian-administered Kashmir

JAGADEESH NV/EPA

INDIA/PAKISTAN

A massacre in Kashmir and fury on the streets of India

By *Hannah Ellis-Petersen* and *Aakash Hassan* DELHI

Disputed region of Kashmir
India and Pakistan both claim the area in full, but each control section of the territory along with China

For Sunil Singh, there is only one way for India to respond to last week's attack by militants in Kashmir.

"Those terrorists and their supporters should be shot dead, and their houses should be blown up," the shopkeeper said. "We should even use the air force and drop bombs on the residential areas where these terrorists find shelter. There should be a bloodbath in Pakistan to teach them a lesson."

Since 25 tourists and one local guide were killed by militants last Tuesday afternoon, as they strolled peacefully through Kashmir's verdant Baisaran valley, much of the Indian public has been baying for vengeance. It was the deadliest attack on civilians in more than two decades in India's restive region of Kashmir. The gruesome details of the attack from survivors – that the gunmen singled out the Hindu men and ruthlessly shot them – sent shock waves of horror across the Hindu-majority country.

Pressure on Narendra Modi and his Hindu nationalist government to mount a military response has continued to grow. The prime minister promised to "identify, track and punish every terrorist and their backer".

For many in India, that means only one thing: direct military action against their neighbour Pakistan, which for decades has been accused of backing and bankrolling the violent separatist insurgency in Indian-administered Kashmir as it claims the territory fully as its own. The Modi government has said Pakistan has "linkages" to last week's attack and two of the militants allegedly responsible are Pakistani.

The attack was initially claimed by a little-known insurgent group, the Kashmir Resistance Front – which India believes to be a proxy for the Pakistan-backed Lashkar-e-Taiba terror group – though it later issued a denial. In an attempt to ward off military retaliation Pakistan can ill afford as it struggles with an economic and security crisis, the country's prime minister, Shehbaz Sharif, promised a "neutral, transparent probe" into the incident.

So far, actions taken by the Modi government have included suspending the Indus Waters treaty, which for six decades had been a critical water-sharing agreement for Pakistan and provides 80% of water for its agriculture. Pakistani diplomats have been summoned and expelled and visas for Pakistanis suspended. Even several Pakistani YouTube channels have been banned, including those run by former cricketers.

But for many on the streets of Delhi's busy Lajpat Nagar market, this was simply not strong enough, as the attack stoked decades-old, deep-rooted anti-Pakistan sentiment. Singh said: "Pakistan is the root of the problem, and our military should go all out to teach them a lesson. Unless we break their back, these heinous acts will continue to occur. Our prime minister has our full support; our military has our full support."

India and Pakistan have gone to war four times since independence in 1947. The last time India took military action against Pakistan was in 2019, though that had disputed results, leading to the downing of an Indian jet.

'Pakistan is the root of the problem, and our military should go all out to teach them a lesson'

Among diplomats in Delhi, the feeling was that India was preparing imminently for some form of contained military action in retaliation, which would nonetheless try to avoid escalating into a fully fledged war between the two nuclear-armed countries.

Sanjiv Mehra, a businessman, echoed the call for a military assault on Pakistan. He said: "There must be a military strike, not only on the people who carried out this attack, but also those who are training them in Pakistan... Death should be avenged by death."

Across India, the attack has stoked and emboldened anti-Muslim sentiment, already rife in a country that has become increasingly polarised down religious lines under the last decade of the Hindu nationalist Modi government. Over the past week, calls for boycotts of Muslims and Kashmiris have become commonplace, particularly by hardline rightwing groups accused of persecuting Muslims, which have largely been given a free rein by Modi's Bharatiya Janata party (BJP).

Vishnu Gupta, the president of prominent hardline group Hindu Sena, said: "The attack in Kashmir was an attack on Hindus, and we will respond in kind – not only against Kashmiris

▲ Indian soldiers patrol in Pahalgam after terrorists attacked a nearby tourist destination
ADNAN ABIDI/REUTERS

▼ Muslims at a protest in Delhi condemning the Kashmir terrorist attack
AMARJEET KUMAR SINGH/ANADOLU/GETTY

HANNAH ELLIS-PETERSEN IS THE GUARDIAN'S SOUTH ASIA CORRESPONDENT; AAKASH HASSAN IS A JOURNALIST WORKING IN INDIA

but against every Muslim in India if the government does not take action. There should be a complete boycott of Kashmir by tourists to teach them a lesson."

This has manifested in direct attacks and violence towards Kashmiri Muslims. Students and security guards have been attacked and run out of their hostels and their jobs, and Kashmiris across the country have returned home, fearing for their safety.

Kashmir, in the foothills of the Himalayas, has been disputed since Pakistan came into being in 1947. Both India and Pakistan claim it in full, but each controls a section of the territory, separated by one of the world's most heavily militarised borders: the "line of control" based on a ceasefire border established after the 1947-48 war. China controls another part in the east.

As a search for the four gunmen responsible has continued, Kashmir – which has a long history of human rights abuses inflicted at the hands of the state – has faced a draconian crackdown, with more than 1,500 people rounded up by police over the past week. Government forces have been using explosives to unilaterally demolish houses in Kashmir of those alleged to be linked to militants, an increasingly common tactic under the BJP nicknamed "bulldozer justice".

Many surrounding houses in these densely populated areas have been partially destroyed in the blasts. Fareeda Banu, whose home was damaged by the demolitions, said: "The soldiers arrived late at night and ordered everyone in the neighbourhood to gather in two houses on the outskirts.

Then they told us to cover our ears. Seconds later, a huge blast shook everything violently. Our children screamed in horror. Why are we being punished for something we had no role in?"

In the aftermath of the attack, local people in Kashmir held a candlelit vigil calling for peace and condemning the violence.

EXPLAINER
KASHMIR

Flashpoint
Why is the territory disputed and so sensitive?

By *Peter Beaumont*

Tensions between India and Pakistan have escalated rapidly after the massacre of 25 Indian tourists and a Nepalese citizen in the disputed Himalayan Kashmir region last Tuesday. A previously unknown Islamic militant group, the Resistance Front, has claimed responsibility for the attack.

Why is Kashmir so sensitive?
The region, in the foothills of the Himalayas, has been disputed since India and Pakistan came into being in 1947. Both claim it in full, but each controls a section of the territory, separated by one of the world's most heavily militarised borders: the "line of control" based on a ceasefire border established after the 1947-48 war. China controls a part in the east.

India and Pakistan have gone to war on two other occasions over Kashmir, most recently in 1999.

The dispute stems from the partition of India in 1947, when small, semi-autonomous "princely states" were being folded into India or Pakistan, and the local ruler chose to become part of India despite the area's Muslim majority.

Armed insurgents in Kashmir have resisted Delhi for decades, with many Muslim Kashmiris supporting the rebels' goal of uniting the territory either under Pakistani rule or as an independent country. India accuses Pakistan of backing militants – a claim Pakistan denies.

What has happened in recent years?
In 2019 Narendra Modi's government launched a security crackdown in Indian-administered Kashmir and revoked the region's special status, which had granted it limited autonomy since 1949. Against a backdrop of widespread repression, insurgent violence tapered off and tourists returned.

New rules allowed outsiders to buy land in Kashmir for the first time. Under its special status, Kashmir had been able to define who its permanent residents were.

With the new domicile rule, India widened who was eligible to live and work in Kashmir, leading to accusations that it was trying to change the demographic makeup of the region. The Resistance Front cited this claim when it claimed last Tuesday's attack.

Why has India reacted so forcefully to the attack?
The attack – amid a visit by the US vice-president, JD Vance – was highly embarrassing for Modi and his Bharatiya Janata party (BJP), which has been boasting since 2019 about the success of its security policies in Kashmir. The anger in India has been exacerbated by the sectarian nature of the attack.

What is the significance of the Indus Waters treaty?
India's decision to suspend the 1964 Indus Waters treaty is a very big deal.

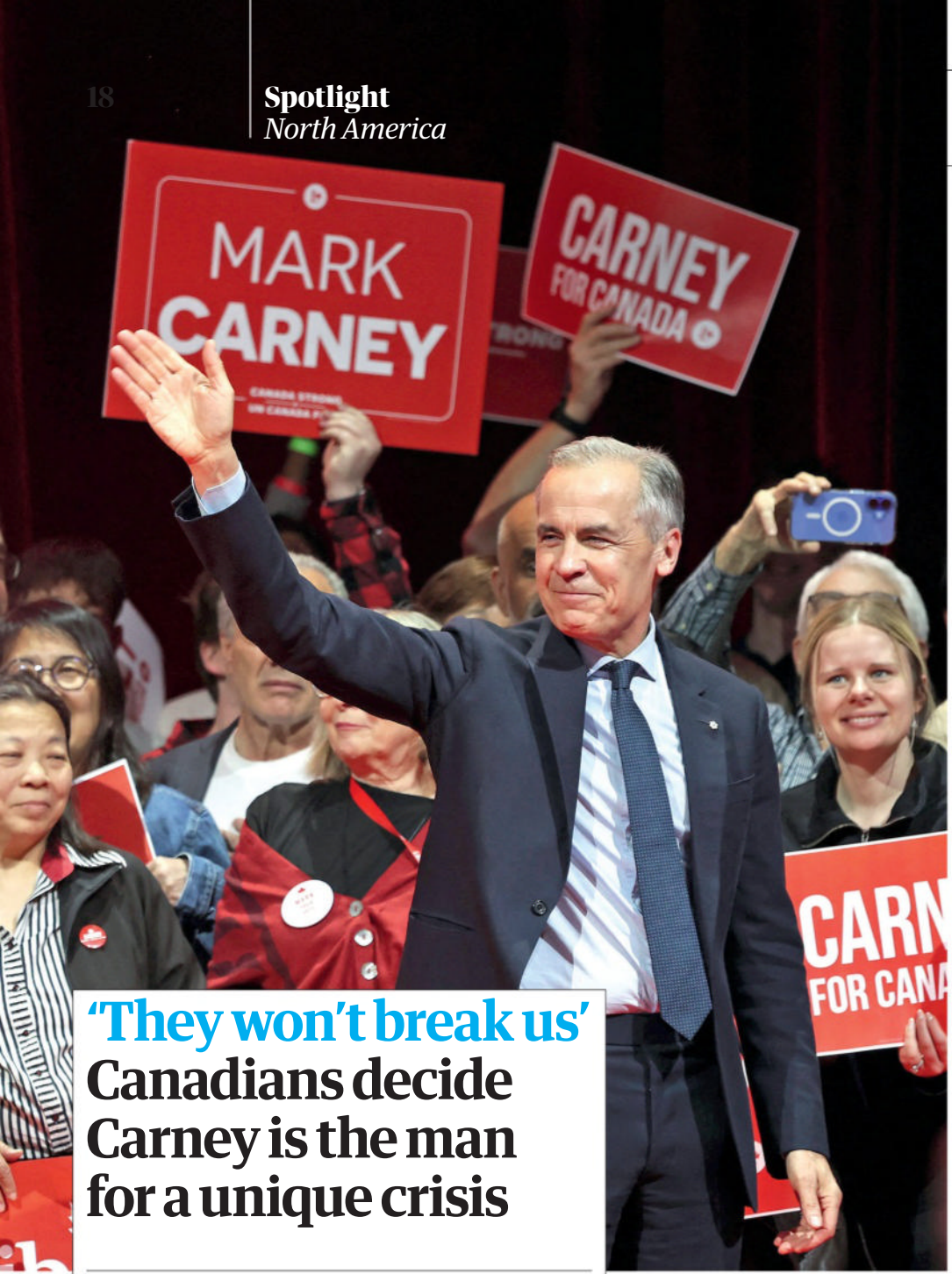
The treaty allows for the sharing of waters of a river system that is a lifeline for both countries. Pakistani agriculture's massive reliance on the Indus system's waters for irrigation makes the treaty crucial for the country. Pakistan has said any interference with water flow would be treated as "an act of war".

How bad could this get?
The last major conflict between India and Pakistan was the 1999 Kargil war, which was limited in comparison with previous conflicts.

Much is made of the fact both countries retain nuclear weapons; conventional wisdom is that this has limited rather than exacerbate the danger of serious conflict.

However, past militant attacks – in 2016 and 2019 – resulted in Indian military retaliation. Many believe that bar means India will probably launch airstrikes on militants across the border as a minimum response.

PETER BEAUMONT IS A SENIOR GUARDIAN INTERNATIONAL REPORTER



‘They won’t break us’ Canadians decide Carney is the man for a unique crisis

CANADA

Just months after being ‘dead and buried’, Liberals turn around election fortunes with voters angry at US president

By *Leyland Cecco* OTTAWA

▲ Mark Carney waves to supporters at a victory party on Tuesday
DAVE CHAN/AFP/GETTY

Mark Carney issued a rallying cry to Canadians under threat from Donald Trump, after a remarkable landmark triumph in the country’s federal election on Monday. Carney used his victory speech to claim Trump wanted to “break us, so that America can own us”.

“That will never, ever happen,” he said to shouts from the crowd.

Canada’s Liberal party won a fourth term in office, capping a miraculous political resurrection and marking a landmark victory for Carney, a former central banker and political novice. He gave a stark assessment of a world order once defined by an integrated global trading system with the US at the centre, saying such a system was over, and he pledged to reshape Canada’s relationships with other nations.

“We are over the shock over American betrayal. But we will never forget the lessons,” he said.

Carney praised party leaders for campaigns that he said had strengthened the country’s democracy. “Let’s put an end to the division and anger of the past. We are all Canadian and my government will work for and with everyone,” he said.

At the beginning of the year, Canada’s Conservatives had a 25-point lead over the Liberal government, and their leader, Pierre Poilievre, looked certain to be the country’s next prime minister. As results came in on Monday and Tuesday, it was unclear whether the Liberals would govern with a majority, or be the leading party in a hung parliament, as in the last two elections. After a narrow victory in the previous federal election, the Liberals relied on the leftwing New Democratic party (NDP) to help pass legislation.

Either way, it represented a huge vindication for Carney’s efforts to present himself as the prime ministerial candidate who would most effectively stand up to Trump.

For the Liberals, the win marks a remarkable recovery. Carney’s predecessor as leader, Justin Trudeau, served as prime minister for nearly 10 years but the twilight of his leadership was marked by threats of mutiny, feuding and a fed-up electorate. Victory was nowhere on the party’s radar.

“We were dead and buried in December. Now we are going to form a government,” David Lametti, a former Liberal justice minister, told CTV late on Monday. “We have turned this around thanks to Mark.”

The last day of the election campaign was overshadowed by the deaths of 11 people after an attacker rammed a car into a Filipino street festival in Vancouver. Until then, the month-long campaign had been defined by Trump.

Trump’s threats to annex the country to make it the 51st state, his belittling of Trudeau as “governor” and threats of economic coercion have all contributed to a sharp feeling of anger and betrayal towards Canada’s southern neighbour.

“The shift in polls was absolutely without precedent,” said David Coletto, the head of the polling firm Abacus. “But to see the honeymoon that followed – and the way that support held – is also unprecedented.

80%

Joint share of the vote between the two main parties, the first time they had exceeded the figure for 70 years

I can't think of other jurisdictions around the world where we've seen this complete reset. And this turns on two factors: how unpopular Justin Trudeau was, and how much of a threat and gamechanger Donald Trump has meant to Canada."

While the conventional wisdom for years has been that figures such as Carney – a former central banker in both the UK and Canada – are no longer viable political leaders, the specific circumstances in Canada this year have turned that analysis on its head. As he said in March: "I'm most useful in a crisis. I'm not that good in peacetime."

Carney has promised to negotiate a new trade deal with the US, and said he hopes to meet Trump in person soon – but adds that Canada has the leverage to wait until the time is right to do so. In the meantime, he wants to focus on lowering internal trade barriers and bolstering major investment projects, to spur the economy. He has also said that the old relationship with the US is over, and emphasised closer ties with the UK and Europe.

For Carney, who served as prime minister for only nine days before calling a snap election, the gambit was one in which he hoped to make history for the party. But also on the line was the prospect of making history for a different reason: had he lost, he would have inherited the mantle of Canada's shortest-serving prime minister.

For the Conservatives, defeat marks a disappointing end to an election campaign the party had been demanding for months. The Tories had seemed all but certain to form a government. But within weeks of Trump's threats and the emergence of Carney as the new Liberal leader, their 25-point poll lead evaporated.

"While we will do our constitutional duty of holding the government to account and proposing better alternatives, we will always put Canada first as we stare down tariffs and other irresponsible threats from President Trump," Poilievre told supporters.

Monday's vote was unusual in other ways, too: for the first time in nearly 70 years, the two main parties were set to take more than 80% of the vote between them, reflecting the collapse of opposition parties including the NDP and the separatist Bloc Québécois.

LEYLAND CECCO COVERS CANADA FOR THE GUARDIAN

Archie Bland also contributed to this report

ANALYSIS
CANADA

Game of chance

A victory that owes much to circumstance – and to Trump

By *Leyland Cecco* OTTAWA

Mark Carney, the economist, banker and politician, has long professed a simple article of faith when navigating through crisis: "A plan beats no plan."

And his rapid ascent to Canada's top job might be taken as evidence of such preparation. But Carney's election victory on Monday was shaped by a series of chance events that hinged more on circumstance than meticulous forethought.

Half a year ago, the Liberal party was in crisis.

In late October, nearly two dozen backbench Liberal MPs signed a letter calling for then prime minister Justin Trudeau to step down amid fears that his unpopularity could lead to a crushing electoral defeat. Separately, a "code red" petition circulated among grassroots party supporters calling for a secret ballot on Trudeau's leadership.

The Conservatives had already attempted the first of a series of manoeuvres to bring down the government through motions of non-confidence, as the Tories sharpened their teeth for what promised to be a bruising federal election campaign.

▼ Mark Carney celebrates his election win

JENNIFER GAUTHIER/ REUTERS

> ***"Trudeau didn't want to leave. People in the party wanted him to go***

Conservative leader Pierre Poilievre, a populist and parliamentary attack dog, used every public appearance to demand an election, hammering the government on its ineffectual response to the country's housing shortage and the cost-of-living crisis. The Liberals trailed the Conservatives by more than 20 points and the country's two polling aggregators had the odds of a Conservative victory at greater than 99%.

"Trudeau didn't want to leave. People in the party wanted him to go, even the ones who weren't speaking up publicly. They kept waiting for him to do the right thing, and he wasn't doing it," said Lori Turnbull, director of Dalhousie University's school of public administration.

There was no heir apparent in the party and no clear sense of policy trajectory that might reverse its dismal popularity. In the end it was a mix of outside forces and internal infighting that eventually brought down the prime minister.

In late December, Chrystia Freeland, Trudeau's finance minister – and one of his closest allies – resigned after being told her boss wanted to replace her with Carney in order to burnish his unpopular government's economic credentials.

Soon after, Donald Trump began to suggest – seemingly in earnest – the US should annex Canada and make it the 51st state, a mission he said could be accomplished with economic coercion.

"The thing to remember is that Carney's candidacy, absent this crisis, would have felt different," said Peter Donolo, a political strategist and director of communications under prime minister Jean Chrétien. "His mistakes would have been more, would have been enlarged. He would have come under more criticism and scrutiny."

And in politics, timing is often as important as policy.

Grazie Francesco: crowds cheer for 'pope of the people'

By *Rory Carroll* ROME

As bells tolled and the coffin emerged from the gloom of the basilica, a solemn hush fell across St Peter's Square, but the crowd itched to break it. Death had silenced Pope Francis but those who had come to see him off were not going to stifle their love or grief. He had requested a simple burial, not a silent one.

The quiet held while 14 pallbearers placed the wooden casket on the edge of the stairs for the start of the mass and continued while cardinals streamed to one side to form a blazing red bloc. On the other side was an array of dark-suited prime ministers, presidents, kings, queens and other royals.

And in front, crowds gathered under Rome's azure spring sky last Saturday to bid farewell to a pope who was number 266, yet a unique one. The first South American, the first Jesuit, the first to say of gay people: "Who am I to judge?"

Before his death on Easter Monday at the age of 88, Francis had simplified papal funeral rites but the Vatican still uncorked centuries of tradition and grandeur with magnificent robes, capes and headgear - the piazza resembled a shimmering quilt of black, white, scarlet, gold and purple.

And still, while Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re, the dean of the College of Cardinals, began the liturgy, the crowd stayed silent. Most of the mass was in Latin and punctuated with hymns and Gregorian chants.

The pontiff was a pope of the people, said the cardinal. When he referred to the pope's outreach to migrants and refugees, the applause swelled. And again when he mentioned Francis's visit to the border between Mexico and the US, and recited the pope's mantra: "Build bridges, not walls."

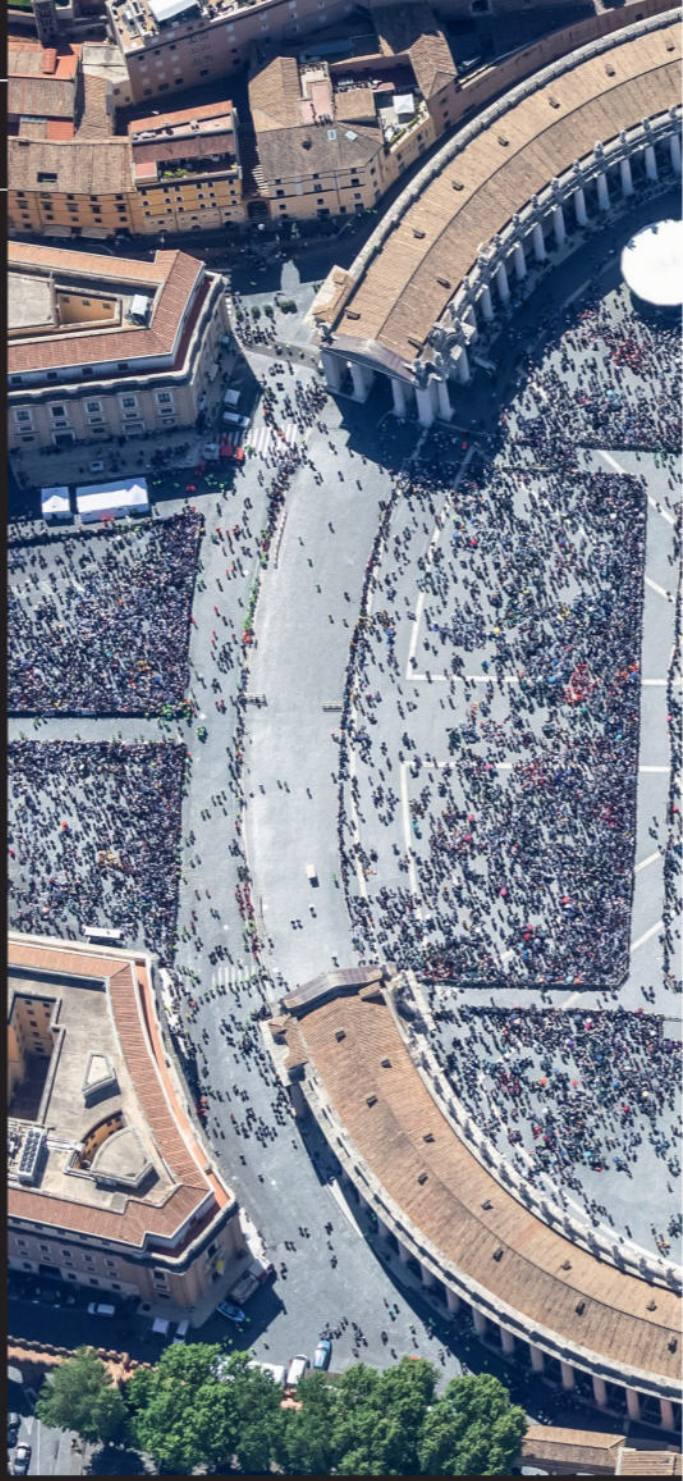
The US president, Donald Trump, did not flinch, nor did Italy's prime minister, Giorgia Meloni, two leaders associated with hardline policies on migrants. When the funeral ended, Trump and other leaders dispersed and headed for the airport, ending the spectacle, or illusion, of global communion.

Before and after trips, Francis used to visit the papal basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore on the Esquiline Hill. A sign on a building opposite caught the mood: "*Grazie Francesco*." The coffin was lowered into a tomb inscribed with a single word: Franciscus.

RORY CARROLL IS A GUARDIAN INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENT

Opinion *Page 48* →

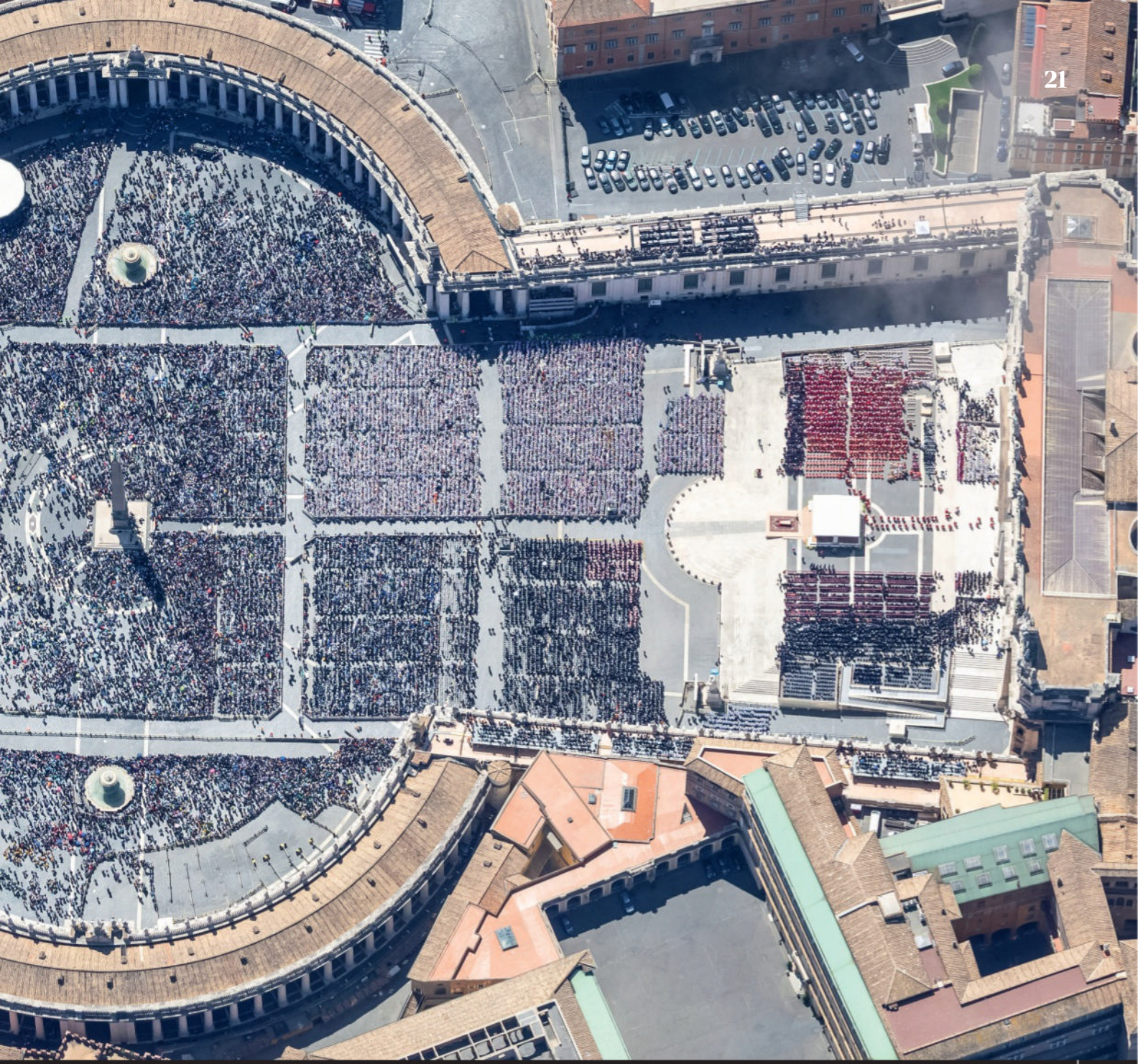
> ***Trump and other leaders dispersed, ending the illusion of global communion***



◀ People wait in St Peter's Square, ahead of the pope's funeral mass
HANNAH MCKAY/REUTERS

▲ An aerial view of the crowds at the Vatican
MASSIMO SESTINI/REX

▶ Members of the clergy form a sea of red at the funeral
NATHAN HOWARD/REUTERS



◀◀Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re blesses the coffin of Pope Francis, during his funeral mass, in St Peter's Square

YARA NARDI/REUTERS

◀ A vehicle carries the pope's coffin past the Colosseum in Rome on its way to the basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore

ANDREI PUNGOVSCHI/GETTY

ANALYSIS
UNITED KINGDOM

Three horses Labour's trade puzzle: keeping Europe, China and US onside

By *Eleni Courea*

Riding two horses is hard enough, but diplomats are joking in private that Keir Starmer and Rachel Reeves are trying to ride three. At the IMF summit in Washington last week, Reeves sought to position the UK as a beacon of free trade, open to business – with the EU, US and China.

Riding those three horses is central to the government's strategy for growth and navigating choppy global waters as the post-cold-war order is redrawn. What Reeves did not address was that the UK was being pulled in opposing directions that may force ministers to make choices between Brussels, Washington and Beijing.

Before the chancellor's trade talks last week with the US treasury secretary, Scott Bessent, it emerged that the US was pushing the UK to relax its rules on agricultural imports that ban chlorine-dipped chicken and hormone-treated beef from being sold in supermarkets. Washington also wants lower UK tariffs on American cars.

Reeves' team may have described last Friday's talks as "upbeat and positive", but the chancellor left Washington without being able to claim any tangible progress.

Behind the scenes, the erratic nature of Donald Trump's administration is causing frustration inside the UK government and giving weight to arguments that ministers should focus on rebuilding bridges with the EU.

Starmer met Ursula von der Leyen, the European Commission's president, in London last week in advance of a landmark UK-EU summit later this month.

As part of their wider reset in relations with Brussels, ministers are pursuing an agri-food agreement that would reduce border checks and boost trade. Tory critics have warned this would cause problems with the US talks – but that may be a price ministers are willing to pay.

The EU and UK, meanwhile, have been subject to increasing overtures from China. Xi Jinping has launched a charm offensive seeking closer ties with countries alienated by Trump's belligerent tariff policy.

The UK has signalled it is open to those overtures, and ministers have been unapologetic in their pursuit of closer ties with Beijing despite security and human rights concerns.

The UK government is alive to the possibility of Washington turning its ire towards London's rapprochement with Beijing. There have been reports the US will demand that countries sever ties with China as the price of securing tariff reductions.

But there are differing views in government and diplomatic circles over how big a problem this will be, given there is no sign of a coherent US policy towards China yet. Trump has simultaneously expressed optimism about improving trade relations with Beijing and triggered a trade war with the country by imposing huge tariffs.

China, meanwhile, is poised to lift sanctions on EU parliamentarians as part of efforts to revive the prospect of a trade deal with the EU.

The prospect of any UK-China trade deal still looks far off, but Beijing's efforts to gain greater access to the EU market will fuel speculation that talks over a deal with the UK could be revived.

The challenges of riding three horses are not just international. Ministers are increasingly contending with domestic political pressure when it comes to relations with all three powers.

Senior MPs have called for any trade deal with the US to be subject to a vote by parliament. Dozens of MPs wrote to ministers last week urging them to strike a youth mobility deal with Brussels despite Home Office concerns about the impact on migration numbers.

Meanwhile, the government has bowed to backbench pressure to ban the UK's national energy company from investing in projects that use solar panels linked to Chinese slave labour. And the government's decision last month to seize control of British Steel from Jingye, the Chinese company that owns it, triggered a furious response from the Chinese embassy. The inevitable conclusion is that trade-offs are unavoidable, but ministers will nonetheless seek to postpone them for as long as possible.

ELENI COUREA IS A POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT FOR THE GUARDIAN

> *Ministers are also facing domestic political pressure over all three powers*

◀ UK chancellor Rachel Reeves in Washington last week
ANDREW HARNIK/GETTY

Mohammad Abu Zeid, 12, tastes the food prepared in his family tent in al-Mawasi, in the southern Gaza Strip

ABDEL KAREEM HANA/AP

PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES

Gaza faces catastrophe as aid runs out and prices soar

By *Jason Burke* JERUSALEM
Malak A Tantesh GAZA

Soaring prices of basic foodstuffs, diminishing stocks of medical supplies and sharp cuts to aid distribution threaten newly catastrophic conditions across Gaza, Palestinians and international aid officials in the battered territory are warning.

Humanitarian organisations including the World Food Programme and Unrwa, which supplies food and services to more than 2 million Palestinians across Gaza, have now distributed the last of their stocks of flour and other foodstuffs to the dozens of community kitchens in the territory that serve basic meals to those with no other option.

Aid groups' warehouses were filled during the ceasefire between Israel and Hamas that came into effect in mid-January and ended in early March. They are now empty.

"There isn't anything left to give them now, so once the last supplies have been used up, the kitchens will have to close," said one senior UN official. "At the moment people are holding up OK but we know from other crises that when things deteriorate, they deteriorate very fast, and we are not far from that point."

Within hours of the ceasefire's collapse almost two months ago, Israel blocked food, fuel, medicine or other items from entering Gaza.

The 47 community kitchens, which provide only lentils, plain pasta or rice, have already reduced portions.

"These people who depend on us are threatened with starvation if this kitchen closes," said Hani Abu Qasim, of the Rafah Charity Kitchen in Gaza.

Markets across Gaza are nearly bare and anything on sale is now too expensive for the vast majority.

Since the ceasefire's end, the price of a kilogram of tomatoes has quadrupled to $8, sugar has gone up seven times and flour 10 to 15 times. Meat or dairy products are unobtainable.

Um Aboud, 45, an academic and journalist in Gaza City, said: "We eat two meals a day, sometimes just one. We have only a small amount of food left.

"The living conditions are extremely difficult. Hospitals are destroyed, with no treatment or medicine available. There is no clean water or electricity. Garbage surrounds us from every direction. Gaza has become a disease-ridden place. People are dying slowly, as if we have been sentenced to death."

'People are dying slowly, as if we have been sentenced to death'

Um Aboud
Academic and journalist

Almost 70% of Gaza is covered by evacuation orders issued by the Israeli military or is part of an expanded buffer zone controlled by Israeli troops. More than 400,000 people have been displaced since the collapse of the ceasefire. Israeli officials justify the blockade with claims that Hamas routinely steals aid. Aid officials in Gaza deny any widespread theft of aid in recent months.

The UN said it identified 3,700 children suffering from acute malnutrition in March, up 80% from February.

There is also a growing shortage of medical supplies. "Everything from sterile gloves to body bags needs replenishment," the International Committee of the Red Cross said. "This is an ongoing and particularly acute challenge as we unfortunately continue to see shockingly high numbers of sick people, including severely wounded patients, which increases pressure on the system."

The war in Gaza was triggered by Hamas's attack on Israel in October 2023, in which militants killed more than 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and took 250 hostages. Israeli officials say 59 hostages remain in Gaza, more than half of whom are thought to be dead.

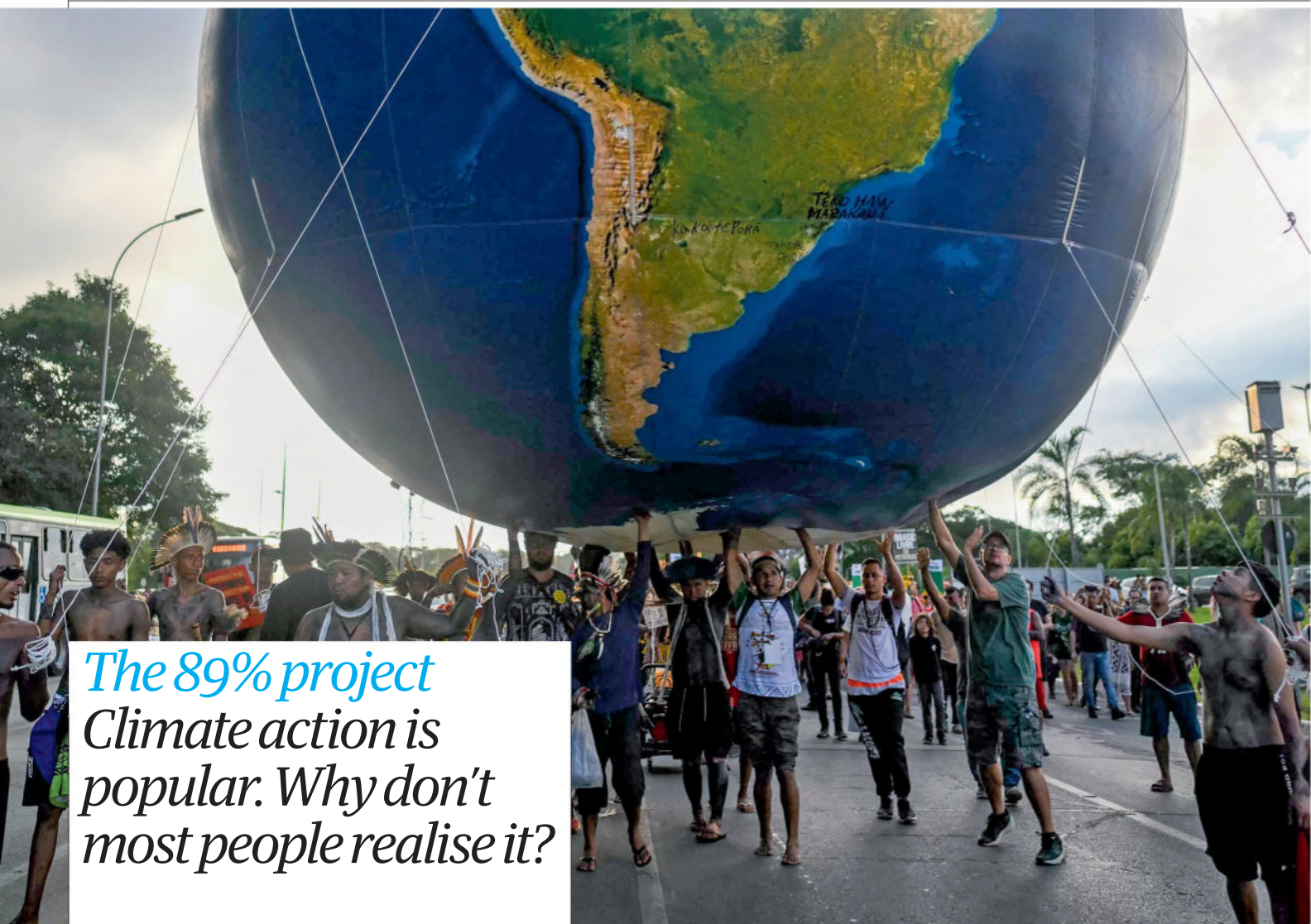
Israel says its blockade also aims to force Hamas into releasing hostages. Rights groups accuse Israel of using a "starvation tactic", endangering the entire population and so making it a potential war crime.

Hospitals in Gaza received the remains of 51 Palestinians over the last weekend who were killed in Israeli strikes, the local health ministry said, bringing the Palestinian death toll from the war to 52,243.

On Monday, the international court of justice (ICJ), the United Nations' principal court, began hearings to establish if Israel's ban on all cooperation with Unrwa's activities in Gaza and the occupied West Bank is unlawful. Israel claims Unrwa has been infiltrated by Hamas, an allegation that has been fiercely contested.

South Africa filed a complaint with the ICJ in December 2023 alleging Israel was committing genocide in Gaza, which Israel denies.

JASON BURKE IS THE GUARDIAN'S INTERNATIONAL SECURITY CORRESPONDENT; MALAK A TANTESH IS A REPORTER BASED IN GAZA



The 89% project
Climate action is popular. Why don't most people realise it?

ANALYSIS
GLOBAL HEATING

By *Damian Carrington*

▲ Environmental protesters in Brasília ahead of last November's Cop30 climate conference

MAURO PIMENTEL/ AFP/GETTY

How much of a $450 pot would you give to a charity that cuts carbon emissions by investing in renewable energy, and how much would you keep for yourself? That was the question posed in a recent academic experiment. The answers mattered: real money was handed out as a result to some randomly chosen participants.

The average person gave away about half the money and kept the rest. But what if you had been told beforehand that the vast majority of other people think climate action is really important? Might you have given more to the charity?

That is what a second experiment tested. Before dividing the cash, these participants were told that 79% of people thought citizens should try to fight the climate crisis. This mattered, because in earlier questions people had significantly underestimated the proportion at just 61%. Being informed about the true level of support boosted the donations by $16 for each person.

The experiment was in the US, but the illusion that climate action is not popular is global. So imagine dispelling that myth: such a shift, experts say, could be a gamechanger, pushing the world over a social tipping point into unstoppable climate progress.

Such a communication campaign, low-cost and scalable, could be among the most powerful tools available to fight the climate crisis, they say. Decades of psychological research indicate that correcting such misunderstandings can change people's views across a swathe of issues, from participating in protests to voting for Donald Trump.

"We're sitting on an enormous potential climate movement," said Prof Anthony Leiserowitz, at Yale University in the US. "It hasn't been activated or catalysed. But when you break through these perception gaps, you help people understand that they're not alone and there is in fact a global movement."

The research started with a simple goal, says Prof Teodora Boneva, at the University of Bonn, Germany, who with colleagues undertook the experiments: "We wanted to make a difference to the world. So we asked ourselves, as social scientists and economists: what kind of research can we do?"

Their biggest result was a huge,

globe-spanning survey that revealed people across the world are united in wanting action to fight the climate crisis but remain a silent majority, because they wrongly think only a minority share their views.

The team found 89% of people across the world wanted their national governments to do more to fight global heating. More than two-thirds said they were willing to give 1% of their income to fight the climate crisis. Crucially, however, they thought only a minority of other people – 43% – would be willing to do the same.

The survey involved 130,000 people in 125 countries, which account for 96% of the world's carbon emissions, and was published in the journal Nature Climate Change. People in China, the world's biggest polluter, were among the most concerned, with 97% saying its government should do more to fight the climate crisis and four out of five willing to give 1% of their income. The world's second biggest polluter, the US, was near the bottom, but still had three-quarters of its citizens saying its government should do more and almost half willing to contribute.

Even in the petrostates of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, the vast majority – about 80% – were willing to give 1% of their income to climate action. How many wanted more government action is unknown: these countries did not allow the question to be asked.

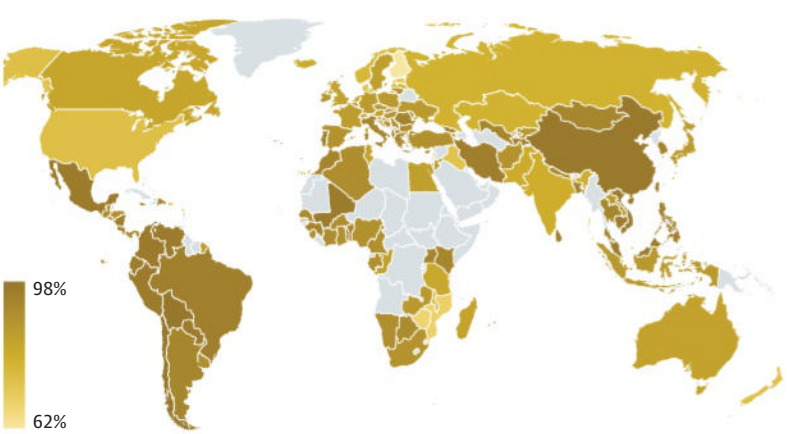
Those feeling the heat most directly had the strongest pro-climate views. Those in rich countries were significantly less willing to contribute 1%. And the countries where people most strongly wanted to fight the climate crisis had implemented significantly more climate policies, the researchers found. The more strongly people believed their fellow citizens would contribute their money to climate action, the more likely they were to give themselves, as Boneva's experiments showed.

"These positive interactions suggest that a change in one factor can unlock potent, self-reinforcing feedback cycles, triggering social-tipping dynamics," the team concluded. "Our results suggest a concerted effort to correct these misperceptions could be a powerful intervention, yielding large, positive effects."

A single survey, such as that by Boneva and colleagues, is fascinating – and is not a freak result. Many large studies have shown that the public desire for climate action is deep and global, and the misperceptions that fuel a "spiral of silence" on climate are found wherever researchers look.

A UN poll in 2024 – dubbed the Peoples' Climate Vote – questioned 75,000 people in countries representing 90% of the global population. It found 80% wanted their countries to strengthen their climate commitments.

Appetite for change
A worldwide average of 89% of people feel their governments should do more to fight global warming



Guardian graphic. Source: Globally representative evidence on the actual and perceived support for climate action, Peter Andre, Teodora Boneva et al

People power
Backing for climate policies

97%
Proportion of respondents in China who thought their government could do more to fight the climate crisis

80%
Proportion of people in Saudi Arabia and UAE willing to give 1% of their income to climate action

86%
Proportion of people who believe countries should put aside their differences and work together on the climate crisis

DAMIAN CARRINGTON IS A GUARDIAN ENVIRONMENT EDITOR

Another recent survey of 40,000 people in 20 of the world's most polluting countries found that 86% of people thought the same.

How the question is phrased can change, but people's hunger for climate action does not. A survey of 140,000 people in 187 countries and territories by the Yale Program on Climate Change Communication asked how high a priority climate change should be for their country's government: 89% of people said very high, high or medium, with 67% saying very high or high.

The perception gaps are real too. A US study from 2022 found people thought only about 40% of their fellow citizens supported climate policies: the real proportion was about 75%. An earlier study found the same in China.

"There is a silent majority in favour of [action on] climate change," said Dr Adrien Fabre, at the International Centre for Research on Environment and Development in France, who led the study. "Making people aware of this would help a lot and bring hope. I think a lot of people are self-censoring and not fighting or voting [for climate action] because they think that their ideas are not in the zeitgeist."

Today's rapidly changing geopolitics makes data on people's climate views more important than ever, said Cassie Flynn, the global director of climate change at the UN Development Programme, which ran the People's Climate Vote.

"People are actually very multilateral," she said. "The result that always sticks with me is this: 86% of people thought that countries should put aside their differences on other issues and work together. People understand our fates are tied together when it comes to the climate crisis and they want world leaders to act on it."

And everyone can help break the "spiral of silence", according to Prof Cynthia Frantz, at Oberlin College in the US: "[Change] simply requires that people be exposed, over and over, from sources they trust or identify with, to the fact that they are not alone in their concern and their willingness to take action.

"The empowering truth is that every public statement counts, and the more diverse the voices, the more effective the message will be."

How 'embodied AI' is reshaping daily life in China

Xi Jinping sees artificial intelligence as key to restoring confidence in the private sector and upgrading the nation's military strength

CHINA

By *Amy Hawkins*
SHENZHEN

On a misty Saturday afternoon in Shenzhen's Central Park, a gaggle of teenage girls are sheltering from the drizzle under a concrete canopy. With their bags of crisps piled high, they crowd around a couple of smartphones to sing along to Mandopop ballads. The sound of their laughter rings out across the surrounding lawn – until it is pierced by a mechanical buzzing sound. Someone has ordered dinner.

A few metres away is an "airdrop cabinet", one of more than 40 in Shenzhen that is operated by Meituan, China's biggest food delivery platform. Hungry park-goers can order anything from rice noodles to Subway sandwiches to bubble tea.

A drone, loaded up with goods from a shopping mall less than 3km away, flies into view, and earshot, hovering over the delivery station for a moment, before steadily lowering and depositing the goods into a sealed box that can only be unlocked by entering the customer's phone number. Dinner is served with not a human in sight. Meituan aims to beat human delivery times by about 10%, although perhaps because of its journey whizzing through the clouds in a thin polystyrene box, the food, char siu pork and a waffle, is slightly cold.

The drones are a small part of the broader robotics and artificial intelligence industry that China is intent on expanding on this year.

China's leaders see artificial intelligence as being the key to upgrading its military strength, solving the problems created by a shrinking workforce, and a source of national pride – especially when Chinese firms manage to circumvent US-led sanctions on core technology. And technology firms, for many years shunned by China's leader, Xi Jinping, are being welcomed back into the fold as Xi seeks to restore confidence in the private sector and encourage domestic innovation.

Many in Washington fear that the US's lead in the AI field is narrowing

In March, Premier Li Qiang promised to "unleash the creativity of the digital economy", with a focus on "embodied AI". Guangdong, which includes the tech hub of Shenzhen, is at the forefront of this movement. The provincial government announced 60m yuan ($8.2m) in funding for innovation centres. Shenzhen in particular is known as China's drone capital, because of the authorities' progressive approach to drone regulations, allowing the "low altitude economy" to develop faster than in other parts of the country. China's Civil Aviation Administration predicts that the value of the sector will increase five-fold to 3.5tn yuan in the next decade.

It is not just drones that are promising – or threatening – to upend the tempo

Leading food delivery company Meituan wants its drones to be 10% quicker than human delivery

$8.2m

Amount of funding that Guangdong province, where Shenzhen is located, is putting towards innovation centres

of urban life in China. The highlight of this year's Spring Festival Gala, which was viewed nearly 17bn times, was a dance performed by a troupe of humanoid robots made by a company called Unitree. On 19 April, the world's first humanoid v human race – a half-marathon – took place in Beijing.

"Applying artificial intelligence to robots basically really kicked into high gear last year," said Rui Ma, a China technology analyst and investor based in San Francisco. The shift could allow the industry to grow at a faster rate in 2025 than in previous years. Reinforcement learning, which means training robots to learn from experience rather than relying on rigid models, allows humanoid robots to be trained in months rather than years, hastening the pace of innovation.

The development of China's robotics industry is intimately linked to advances in AI, and many in Washington fear that the US's lead in the field is narrowing. One major tool in the US's arsenal has been its control over the important parts of the supply chain for semiconductors, the microchips used to train advanced AI models. The US restricts the export of the most sophisticated chips to China.

But in January, a previously unknown Chinese firm called DeepSeek set the Chinese tech scene alight with the release of a large language reasoning model, R1, which performs as well as leading US competitors, at a fraction of the price. The model sparked a stock market crash, with $1tn wiped off Wall Street's leading tech index as investors feared that the US's pole position in the tech race was no longer guaranteed.

"You can't really overemphasise how crazy a moment that was," said Ma.

Since then, China's AI industry has been brimming with optimism. It was already being promoted by the government as the answer to China's long term, sustainable growth, and now, said Ma, the public has started to believe it too.

Li Shuhao, a tech entrepreneur based in Guangzhou who founded an AI marketing company, Tec-Do, in 2017, was in the United States when the DeepSeek moment happened. All of a sudden, "it was way easier for me to arrange interviews and arrange meetings with other AI scientists", he said.

"DeepSeek is kind of a symbol for the oriental way of doing business," said Li, referring to the strategy pursued by Liang Wenfeng, DeepSeek's founder, of financing it through his own hedge fund rather than seeking external venture capital funding. "This is how typical Chinese entrepreneurs think. Just survive first, then do something new."

DeepSeek published its work as open source, a principle that the government has long favoured and a move that has encouraged widespread adoption of its model. Robotics has been a particular beneficiary.

The robotics supply chain can loosely be divided into three areas: the brain, the body and the application of the technology in the real world. China has long been confident in its ability in the latter two areas – advanced supply chains in other hi-tech industries such as electric vehicles and autonomous drones show that China has both the capacity to produce industrial components at scale and the know-how to assemble them into complex goods. But making a robot brain that can learn human-like behaviours and movements has been elusive. It requires sophisticated AI.

DeepSeek's R1 model changed the game, paving a way for domestic humanoid robotics companies to catch up with overseas competitors, said analysts at Goldman Sachs in a recent note. The fact that DeepSeek's open-source model uses less advanced chips helps level the playing field for Chinese companies.

The industry is still fraught with challenges. Any AI model requires reams of data for training, such as information on how to physically move through space and interact with objects or people, is relatively scarce.

With a shrinking workforce, China is keen to find ways to automate wherever possible. At March's Boao Forum for Asia, a business conference, organisers were keen to dish out *jianbing*, a savoury pancake, made by a robotic arm in a booth, similar to the claws that collect stuffed toys in an arcade (the resulting snack was not as crispy as a human-made offering). Parks in Beijing have ramped up their surveillance abilities by sticking cameras on autonomous buggies that drive along the paths.

"Robots are not replacing the vast majority of the labour force," said Amber Zhang, a product manager at BigOne Lab, a Beijing-based data intelligence firm. "For instance, if you look at robot taxis, how many cab drivers are actually getting replaced? There are still a lot of hurdles."

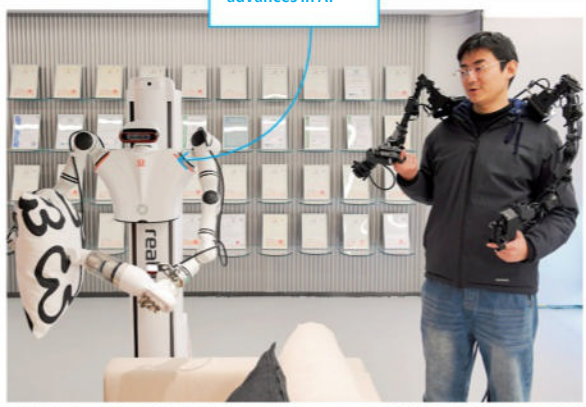
But it's undeniable that the narrative has shifted. With other sectors of China's economy facing significant challenges, the government is keen to back a winning horse. "Now that real estate is no longer a source of revenue for many local governments, they have to attract good companies and support what they are doing," Zhang said.

AMY HAWKINS IS THE GUARDIAN'S SENIOR CHINA CORRESPONDENT

Additional research by Jason Tzu-Kuan Lu

$1tn

Amount wiped off a Wall Street tech index after launch of DeepSeek's R1 large language reasoning model



The development of China's robotics industry is intimately linked to advances in AI

With other sectors of the economy facing challenges, AI has attracted more investment

ANTHONY KWAN; FU DING/BEIJING YOUTH DAILY/VCG/GETTY; CFOTO/FUTURE

KENYA

Feelers out
Smuggling bust exposes a booming trade in ants

By *Peter Muiruri* NAIROBI
with *Guardian staff and agencies*

Poaching busts are familiar territory for the officers of Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS), an armed force tasked with protecting the country's iconic creatures. But what awaited guards when they descended in early April on a guesthouse in the west of the country was both larger and smaller in scale than the smuggling operations they typically encounter. There were more than 5,000 smuggled animals, caged in their own enclosures. Each one, however, was about the size of a little fingernail: 18-25mm.

The cargo, which two Belgian teenagers had apparently intended to ship to exotic pet markets in Europe and Asia, was ants. Their enclosures were a mixture of test tubes and syringes containing cotton wool – environments that authorities say would keep the insects alive for weeks.

"We did not come here to break any laws. By accident and stupidity we did," said Lornoy David, one of the Belgian smugglers.

David and Seppe Lodewijckx, both 19 years old, pleaded guilty after being charged last month with wildlife piracy, alongside two other men in a separate case who were caught smuggling 400 ants. They are due to be sentenced on 7 May. The cases have shed new light on the global ant trade – and what authorities say is a growing trend of trafficking "less conspicuous" creatures.

The seized species include *Messor cephalotes*, a large red harvester ant native to east Africa. Queens of the species grow to about 20-24mm long, and the ant sales website Ants R Us describes them as "many people's dream species", selling them for $135 per colony. The ants are prized for their behaviours and complex colony-building skills, "traits that make them popular in exotic pet circles, where they are kept in specialised habitats known as formicariums", KWS said.

One online ant vendor, who asked not to be named, says the market is thriving, and there had been a growth in ant-keeping shows, where enthusiasts meet to compare ant-housing and species details. "There are more ant vendors than before, and prices have become more competitive," he said. "In today's world, where most people live fast-paced, tech-driven lives, many are disconnected from themselves and their environment. Watching ants in a formicarium can be surprisingly therapeutic."

◀ Authorities say there is a growing trend of trafficking 'less conspicuous' creatures such as insects
GULFU/GETTY

$135

Price that a colony of Messor cephalotes *(harvester ants) can fetch on an ant sales website. The east African ants are prized for their colony-building skills*

Scientists have raised concerns that the burgeoning trade in exotic ants could pose a significant biodiversity risk. "Ants are traded as pets across the globe, but if introduced outside of their native ranges they could become invasive with dire environmental and economic consequences," researchers concluded in a 2023 paper tracking the ant trade across China. "The most sought-after ants have higher invasive potential," they wrote.

Removing ants from their ecosystems could be damaging. Illegal exportation "not only undermines Kenya's sovereign rights over its biodiversity but also deprives local communities and research institutions of potential ecological and economic benefits", said KWS. Dino Martins, an entomologist and evolutionary biologist, says harvester ants are important insects on the African savannah, and any trade will have negative consequences for the ecology of the grasslands.

"Harvester ants are seed collectors, and they gather [the seeds] as food for themselves, storing these in their nests. A single large harvester ant colony can collect several kilos of seeds of various grasses a year. In the process of collecting grass seeds, the ants 'drop' a number … dispersing them through the grasslands," said Martins.

The insects also serve as food for various other species including aardvarks, pangolins and aardwolves.

Martins says he is surprised to see that smugglers feeding the global "pet" trade are training their sights on Kenya, since "ants are among the most common and widespread of insects".

"Insect trade can actually be done more sustainably, through controlled rearing of the insects," he said. "This can support livelihoods in rural communities such as the Kipepeo Project, which rears butterflies in Kenya." Locally, the main threats to ants come not from the illegal trade but poisoning from pesticides, habitat destruction and invasive species, says Martins.

Philip Muruthi, a vice-president for conservation at the African Wildlife Foundation in Nairobi, says ants enrich soils, enabling germination and providing food for other species.

"When you see a healthy forest … you don't think about what is making it healthy. It is the relationships all the way from the bacteria to the ants to the bigger things," he said.

PETER MUIRURI IS A JOURNALIST BASED IN KENYA

SOUTH AFRICA

Activists and artists create new way to regenerate 'City of Gold'

By *Rachel Savage*

Bethabile Mavis Manqele mops the veranda of the house she has lived in for most of the past 40 years. The ceiling above her is full of holes, blackened by years of cooking fires. Manqele, 64, isn't sure how many people live in the house's seven rooms. There are no utilities, the landlord is absent and she hasn't paid rent in years, she says through a translator. The occupants share a portable toilet provided and cleaned by an NGO, plus one outdoor tap with the house next door, which has no roof.

Manqele's home in the inner city district of Berea is emblematic of Johannesburg's downtown, which was progressively abandoned by wealthy people, businesses and government from the 1980s. Hundreds of buildings left empty by landlords are now overcrowded, and the area is notorious for crime.

The shine is coming off the City of Gold, with growing numbers of residents dissatisfied with basic services such as water and roads, according to the latest quality of life survey by the Gauteng City-Region Observatory. In March, South Africa's president, Cyril Ramaphosa, criticised the environment as being "not pleasing" and set up a presidential working group to "revive" Johannesburg before it hosts the G20 summit in November.

Meanwhile, artists and businesspeople are rallying to defend their city. "It's always hustling - there's an energy," said Stephen du Preez, who manages 11 business improvement districts and volunteers with Jozi My Jozi, a coalition launched in 2023 to spruce up downtown. "They're friendly; they're damn good people," he said.

There are now about 140 businesses donating to Jozi My Jozi, with 75m rand ($4m) spent in two years on projects such as installing 613 solar-powered streetlights. The initiative, which Du Preez says works with local communities rather than gentrifying them, is also expanding to the former black-only township of Soweto.

Previous efforts to regenerate inner-city districts, such as the trendy area of Maboneng, have excluded those living there, says Edward Molopi of the Socio-Economic Rights Institute of South Africa (Seri), an NGO supporting Manqele and her neighbours. He says these efforts often involve evicting residents then raising rents: "Is there a place for the poor in the inner city? Many of these initiatives will answer in the negative."

Johannesburg is a highly unequal city in the world's most unequal country. The new business district, Sandton, is known as "Africa's richest square mile". An estimated 1m trees were planted when the city was built on Highveld grassland in 1886. But the townships, created by the apartheid regime in the mid-20th century to force non-white people to the city's margins, are far less lush.

At the city's birth, when gold was discovered, black male migrant workers lived in mine camps in the south, white "Randlords" in hilltop mansions, and more mixed communities between. "There were social fractures in the city at the beginning," said Noor Nieftagodien, a history professor at the University of the Witwatersrand.

Middle-class complaints are growing louder as issues such as water outages spread to the suburbs. Political instability and corruption are often blamed.

The inner city's issues culminated in tragedy in 2023, when 77 people were killed in a fire in an overcrowded apartment building owned by the city. An inquiry blamed neglect by local authorities.

The city government is implementing a "bad buildings strategy" to deal with "hijacked" buildings, spokesperson Virgil James said, noting there are court orders to evacuate the occupiers to temporary emergency accommodation from six buildings.

In Manhattan Court, a 108-room building, residents collectively pay 25,000 rand a month to the city for services and to secure ownership of their homes, says Noma Qwele, a residents' committee member. They also pay for maintenance and security, but they don't know who the building's owner is after it was sold in an auction.

In Fordsburg, another inner city district, the Bag Factory studios are home to nine long-term artists and six younger ones on bursaries.

"It's a very vibrant city," said Ndaya Ilunga, who was born in Johannesburg in 1995, gesturing amid her vivid Afro-futurist works. "I'm now part of that, those people who create that energy."

RACHEL SAVAGE IS THE GUARDIAN'S SOUTHERN AFRICA CORRESPONDENT

'It's always hustling - there's an energy. They're damn good people'

Noma Qwele has lived in Manhattan Court since 1986 but doesn't know who currently owns the building after it was sold in an auction

MADELENE CRONJÉ

SPACE

Fin frontier
Why fish farms on the moon may be closer than you think

The Lunar Hatch project is studying whether aquaculture might be able to provide a source of protein for astronauts on space missions

By *Kim Willsher* PALAVAS-LES-FLOTS

At first glance, there doesn't seem to be anything special about the sea bass circling around a tank in the small scientific facility on the outskirts of Palavas-les-Flots in southern France. But these fish are on a mission.

When the fish are fully grown, they will produce offspring that will be the first to be launched into space as part of a scientific project called Lunar Hatch that is exploring whether sea bass can be farmed on the moon – and eventually Mars – as food for future astronauts.

The project is the brainchild of Dr Cyrille Przybyla, a researcher in marine biology for the French National Institute for Ocean Research, who will be watching the fish's progress like any anxious parent.

"Fish is an excellent source of protein because it is the animal organism that we digest the best and it has omega 3 and important B vitamins that will be needed for astronauts in space to maintain muscle mass," Przybyla said. "The question was: how can we produce food that far away?"

The answer is, he says, to blast the eggs into space where they will hatch in the time it takes to get to the International Space Station (ISS). Initially, the fish will simply be observed before being frozen and returned to Earth but eventually the idea is that they will be farmed on the moon.

Przybyla is confident that should the world's space agencies decide to build a moon base, Lunar Hatch will be able to put sea bass on the menu at least twice a week.

Sending fish into space is not new. The first "aquastronauts", as they have been called, to make the journey were tiny fish known as mummichogs (*Fundulus heteroclitus*) sent into orbit on one of the Apollo missions in 1973. Until then, these unremarkable creatures had rarely ventured far from brackish creeks and coastal waters or salt marshes.

JAMES THEW/ALAMY; GUARDIAN DESIGN; O BARBAROUX/IFREMER; G DUTTO; CYRILLE PRZYBYLA

Three years later, two Soyuz astronauts carried out a series of experiments with an aquarium of guppies in the Salyut Soviet space lab.

In 2015, zebrafish were sent to the ISS to investigate how muscles atrophy in microgravity, while in April last year, China sent several zebrafish to its Tiangong space station. Other missions have transported oyster toadfish, swordtails, medakas, guppies and goldfish.

But this is the first time they could actually be farmed and used as a regular food source for astronauts.

Przybyla says Lunar Hatch's ultimate aim is to create a "closed-loop food chain" on the moon, using a series of compartments. The first tanks will be filled with water from ice found at the bottom of craters at the moon's poles. The wastewater produced by fish in these tanks will help to produce micro-algae that can then be used to feed filtering organisms, including bivalves, or zooplankton that would collect some of the waste.

The faeces from the sea bass in the first tank would, meanwhile, be treated by shrimps and worms that would in turn be food for the fish.

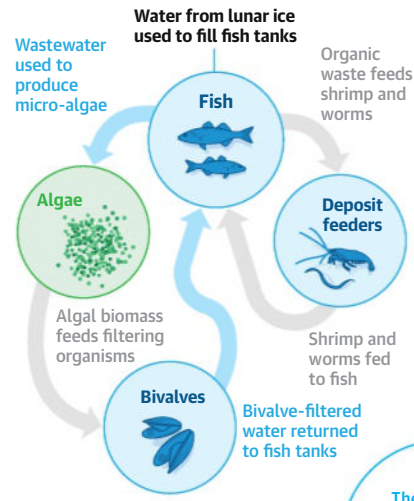
"The aim of Lunar Hatch is to have no waste," Przybyla said. "Everything is recycled through an aquaculture system that would have to be autonomous for four to five months."

The team calculates that to provide two portions of fish each week for seven astronauts on a mission lasting 16 weeks, about 200 sea bass would be needed. As well as the 200 fertilised sea bass eggs sent into space, another 200 siblings produced by the fish at Palavas-les-Flots will be kept as a control group.

The path from slightly eccentric idea to the stage of development Przybyla's project has reached has taken almost a decade. In 2016, the European Space Agency asked the scientific community for ideas for a future lunar base called the Moon Village. It liked Przybyla's proposal and, at the end of 2018, he received his first funding from the Centre national d'études spatiales (CNES), the French national space agency.

'The aim is to have no waste. Everything is recycled through an aquaculture system'

The Lunar Hatch closed-loop food chain *The project's ultimate aim is for an aquaculture system on the moon*


Water from lunar ice used to fill fish tanks
Wastewater used to produce micro-algae
Fish
Organic waste feeds shrimp and worms
Algae
Deposit feeders
Algal biomass feeds filtering organisms
Shrimp and worms fed to fish
Bivalves
Bivalve-filtered water returned to fish tanks

The project is researching whether sea bass could be farmed on the moon
Sea bass eggs at 70 and 73 hours of development
Marine biology researcher Cyrille Przybyla visiting Nasa

The initial step was to establish whether the fertilised fish eggs could withstand being shaken about during a space launch; the nearby University of Montpellier's Space Centre agreed to simulate the propulsion of a Russian Soyuz rocket on its equipment used to test satellite prototypes.

"Soyuz makes the most vibrations at lift-off compared with other launchers. We used two species and embryos at two different stages and we saw the vibrations didn't affect their development," Przybyla said.

"Then we looked at what else could disturb the fish cells on their journey, including hypergravity induced by acceleration and cosmic radiation and whether they would continue to form or whether their DNA and development would be affected."

So far the results obtained at Palavas-les-Flots are positive. Now, they need to be put into practice.

"We've done all the possible simulations we can do on the ground so the goal now is to have a space mission to verify that data and so we can examine the difference between a control group of fish siblings that remain on the Earth," he said.

He and his juvenile sea bass must wait until CNES and Nasa's Kennedy Space Center in Florida find him a place on a mission, to test his theories.

Since announcing the Lunar Hatch programme, the Chinese have revealed they too are carrying out research into closed circuit aquaculture systems that could be used on their space station – so the race is on.

200

Number of sea bass needed to provide two portions of fish each week for seven astronauts on 16-week mission

For those who are more concerned about life on Earth, Przybyla says the Lunar Hatch programme has an equally vital application here.

"What we have done is convert a system we have been working on for the Earth to the moon," he said. "On Earth, this recycled circular loop aquaculture is important not only for preservation of the environment but also for economic durability. The same principle that applies for the moon could be used to feed isolated communities."

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◀ Federal workers protest against cuts and layoffs imposed by Doge
SARAH YENESEL/EPA

ANALYSIS
UNITED STATES

Cutting crew
Is the chaos unleashed by Musk's Doge on the wane?

By *David Smith* WASHINGTON

"This is the chainsaw for bureaucracy!" screamed Elon Musk, wielding the power tool before a cheering crowd at a rightwing political conference. The tech titan promised to slice and dice the US federal government and save taxpayers a trillion dollars. Oozing confidence, the world's richest person seemed unstoppable.

That was February. Last week Musk announced that he is hanging up his chainsaw and stepping back from his role overseeing the unofficial "department of government efficiency", or Doge, to focus on Tesla, his beleaguered electric vehicle company.

It is possible that the relative lull in the chaos unleashed by Doge presages a new, more dangerous phase. CNN has reported that Doge is building a master database to accelerate deportations of undocumented immigrants by combining data from across the federal government.

Doge was created by an executive order that Trump signed on 20 January to "modernize federal technology and software to maximize governmental efficiency and productivity". But its mandate – due to expire on 4 July 2026 – soon broadened as its staffers swept through government departments looking for spending and staff cuts.

The Doge team is small, with about 79 appointed employees and 10 employees seconded from other agencies. Many of the staffers are young software engineers who are current and former employees in Musk companies, with little to no experience inside the government.

Doge members have entered more than 20 government agencies, gaining access to computer systems that contain personal data of federal workers and millions more Americans. Their abrupt actions have faced resistance from both Republicans and the courts, with some moves being blocked.

Even so, the collateral damage has been devastating. More than 260,000 federal workers have been fired, taken buyouts or retired early, according to a tally by Reuters.

The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB), which protects Americans from unscrupulous lenders, has been shut down and many employees received termination notices. The CFPB has investigated claims about loan policies at Tesla, raising questions about conflicts of interest.

The US Institute of Peace (USIP), a congressionally funded thinktank, was another target. George Moose, 80, the institute's acting president, locked himself in his office in protest. Andrew Cheatham, who was a senior adviser at USIP, said: "To his great credit he was making the last stand … This man had dedicated his life to diplomacy."

Cheatham, 45, a lawyer who worked at the United Nations for 10 years, was among staff fired by email. He said: "Elon Musk has the nerve to tweet that USIP was helping support terrorists. I've put my own life in danger in 27 post-Islamic State cities. He has no earthly idea what it means to try to prevent extremism, terrorism and violence."

The people most affected by Doge's efforts so far have been recipients of foreign aid. It largely shut down the US Agency for International Development, or USAID, cancelling more than 80% of its humanitarian programmes.

In a presentation last month at the American Enterprise Institute (AEI) thinktank in Washington, senior fellow Nat Malkus said the USAID cuts represented 40% of all contracts cancelled and 73% of actual savings made by Doge as of 23 March. This far outstripped contracts and savings at the Department of Health and Human Services (9% and 6%), Department of the Interior (7% and 1%) and every other department. But, said Malkus, "it appears the blitzkrieg stage has sort of wound down".

Chris Scott, a Democratic strategist who was Kamala Harris's coalitions director in last year's election campaign, rejected the idea that the Doge storm has passed.

"Unfortunately, with anything with this administration and what it started, even when it dies out for a little bit, I don't take it as they have quit," he said. "They retool and they reassess their approach. They're reassessing how to go about it in their next phase."

DAVID SMITH IS THE GUARDIAN'S WASHINGTON BUREAU CHIEF

Damage done
Doge and its spending cuts

79
Number of people in Doge team, along with 10 employees seconded from other agencies

260k
Number of federal workers who have lost their jobs

73%
Proportion of savings imposed by Doge that were made in USAID

CANADA

Vigil draws on Filipino 'bayanihan' spirit after car attack

By *Dustin Godfrey* VANCOUVER

The vigil drew a crowd so large that police in Vancouver had to move the crime scene barriers back so that people would not spill out on to the busy traffic along 41st Avenue. "It's amazing. It's really a show of how important the Filipino community is just very broadly," said Chelsea Brager.

Brager works with a Filipino youth organisation called Anakbayan BC that helped organise a candlelight vigil last Sunday evening to remember victims of the previous day's car-ramming attack that killed 11 people and injured dozens at a festival in the Sunset neighbourhood, home to the city's Filipino community.

Earlier in the day, the nearby Anglican memorial church of St Mary the Virgin was overflowing with members of the Filipino community and others who wished to pay their respects.

Last Saturday had been intended as a night of celebration for the community – of resilience and of collective resistance. It was the second time the festival had been held in the city. Lapu Lapu Day commemorates the victory in 1521 by Indigenous Filipinos, led by Lapu Lapu, against Spanish colonisers on the island of Mactan. It drew nearly 100,000 people, many of whom were families with young children.

The festival advertised a street parade, cultural activities, a basketball tournament and local food vendors. The group Black Eyed Peas had just finished their headline concert when a driver tore through the crowd. A suspect, named by police as Kai-Ji Adam Lo, 30, was charged with eight counts of second degree murder.

"Last night, there was a horrible tragedy that occurred at a happy event, and we're still reeling from it," said RJ Aquino, the chair of Filipino BC, which had organised the event, at a press conference. It's "not lost on us and the people in our team that the spirit of the festival was about resistance, resilience", as well as courage and strength, "and we're going to have to call that up in ourselves", he added.

Vancouver had more than 38,600 residents of Filipino heritage in 2021, representing 5.9% of the city's total population, according to the most recent census.

Authorities had yet to release the names of those killed but said they were aged between five and 65. Some of the injured were in critical condition. Vancouver's interim police chief, Steve Rai, described the carnage as "the darkest day" in the city's history.

Brager first knew something was wrong when, on their way home, they noticed others running away from the event. "We didn't quite know what was happening until we saw the news when we got home," said Brager.

"I just saw my phone kind of blow up with tons of messages," said Maki Cairns, of Gabriela BC, a Filipino women's movement that also helped organise Sunday's vigil. "I remember getting people from the US messaging me as well to make sure I was OK," Cairns said.

Cairns' own first call was to her mother, who she was relieved to hear had not been at the event.

In Vancouver, Filipinos have deep roots and a strong sense of community, something Aquino invoked. "Looking at the history of our people, we've encountered many tragedies, and we're going to be OK. It's OK to not feel OK right now. It's OK to be sad, be angry, be confused. But as we work through those feelings, we will have each other to do that," he said.

"We'll need to make sure to be there for each other to do that. There's no better time to really live up to the bayanihan spirit and say that we are here to lift each other up."

"Bayanihan" refers to a community spirit in Filipino culture.

Back at the church of St Mary the Virgin, attendees heard a sermon by Fr Expedito Farinas. They sang hymns, took communion and shared lunch in a parish hall. Inside and outside the church, community members comforted one another.

Jaela Villegas, from Migrante BC, a Filipino organisation fighting for migrant worker rights in British Columbia, said the attendance at the church was "overwhelming in a really good way".

"I didn't just see my Filipino community. It was also other communities or nationalities, or even other religions. They came to support us, and so that's very comforting," Villegas said.

"A Palestinian earlier came up to me and said, 'Your loss is our loss.' I think that's so heartwarming."

DUSTIN GODFREY IS A JOURNALIST BASED IN VANCOUVER

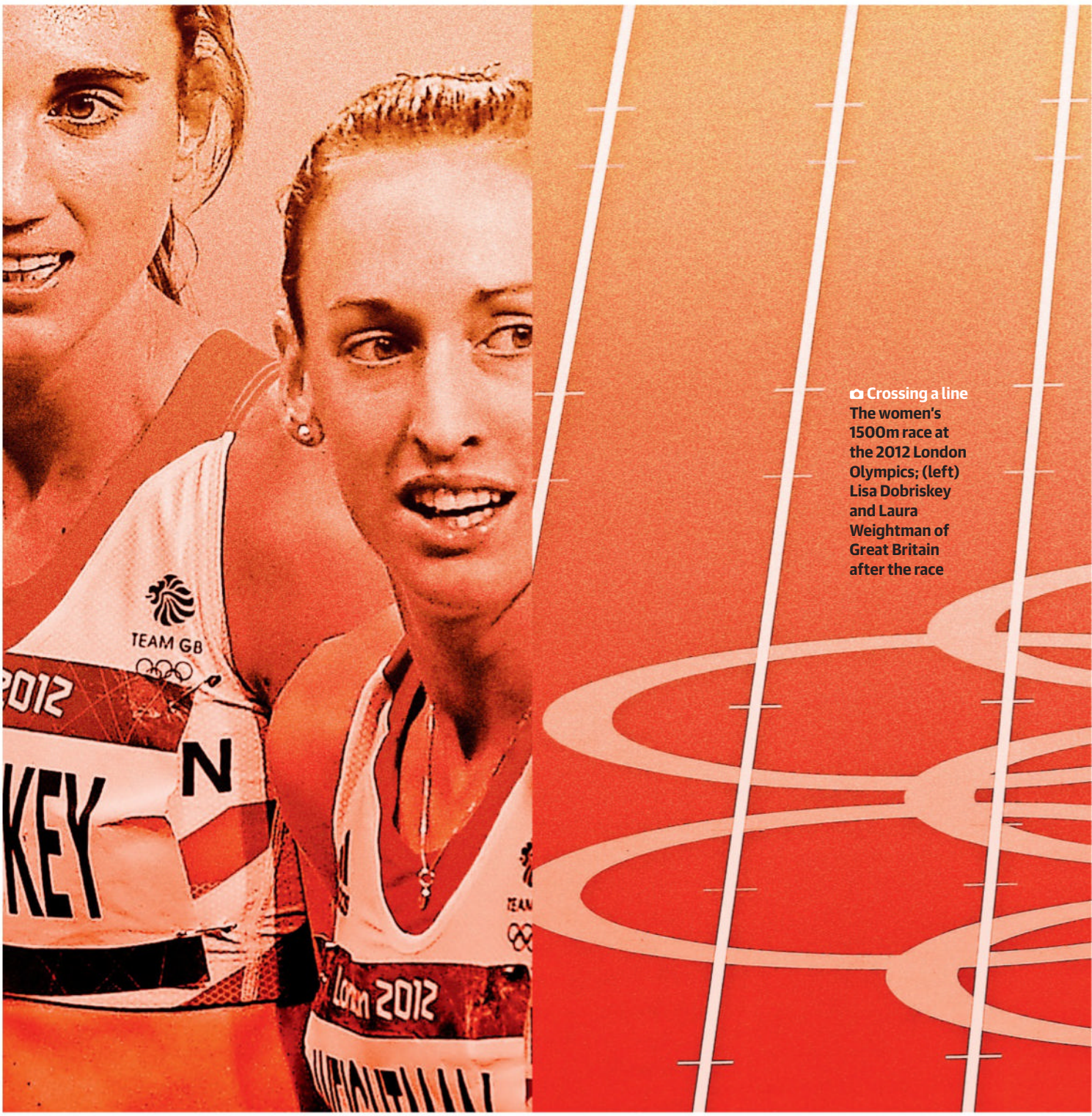
'The spirit of the festival was resistance, resilience; we have to call that up in ourselves'

RJ Aquino
Filipino BC chair

▼ The aftermath of a car attack that killed 11 and injured dozens at a Filipino festival in Vancouver

CARLOS OSORIO/ REUTERS

THE DIRTIEST



Crossing a line The women's 1500m race at the 2012 London Olympics; (left) Lisa Dobriskey and Laura Weightman of Great Britain after the race

How did the 2012 Olympics women's 1500m get its reputation? Athletes cheated out of

RACE IN HISTORY

medals discuss what happened – and how the results unravelled *By Esther Addley* ➔

DANIEL OCHOA DE OLZA/AP; STU FORSTER/GETTY; GUARDIAN DESIGN

THE TUNNEL

IN WHICH ATHLETES WAIT before they enter a stadium ahead of a major race is "by no means a friendly place to be", says Lisa Dobriskey – and as a former Team GB athlete who won Commonwealth gold and world championship silver at 1500m, she has stood in enough of them to know. "Different people handle it differently," she says. "Some people are really relaxed and friendly; other people just look right through you. It's scary. I remember my coach saying to me, 'When you go to the Olympics, you'll be standing next to the meanest, toughest, hardest people that you'll ever face.' Everybody wants to win."

As it turned out, the wait to walk into London's Olympic stadium for the final of her event in August 2012 was even more stressful than she'd been warned. With British excitement at fever pitch, support and expectation for home athletes neared hysteria at times. "It was terrifying," Dobriskey says of hearing the 80,000-strong stadium crowd. "People were yelling, people were screaming, it was overwhelming."

Having come an agonising fourth in Beijing four years earlier, Dobriskey had battled her way into the London final after a nightmarish year. In early 2012 she developed a stress fracture of her thigh, delaying her track training for months; then in late May, a niggling problem with her breathing led to her being taken to hospital with a life-threatening pulmonary embolism. Doctors advised her not to think about running for six months. Instead, less than three months later, here she was in an Olympic final, having won her heat and with commentators talking up her chances of a medal.

"That weight, that pressure," she says, "I took it all on personally." Footage of the race buildup shows the 13 athletes lining up jumpily on the track, with Dobriskey on the far outside lane. Her name is announced first, to a roar from the crowd. She bounces on her toes, then stands nervously, her eyes closed, breathing deeply.

A little more than four minutes and 10 seconds later, it was all over. Aslı Çakir Alptekin, a Turkish athlete who had won the European championships title a month earlier, had again taken gold after leading from the front for the last 300m. Silver was claimed by another Turkish competitor, Gamze Bulut, after a surge to the line as several others faded. Bronze went to Bahrain's Maryam Yusuf Jamal. Dobriskey crossed the line in 10th place, almost three seconds off the pace.

She was bitterly disappointed at the result – but also deeply frustrated. A month earlier, after competing at a Diamond League meet in Paris at which a Moroccan athlete, Mariem Alaoui Selsouli, and Çakir Alptekin had raced seemingly effortlessly to a fast time, Dobriskey had privately contacted the world athletics governing body, the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF, since renamed World Athletics), to say she believed the athletes were doping. Sure enough, days later Selsouli had tested positive for a banned diuretic – which can be used to flush other performance-enhancing substances out of the body – and had been barred from competing at London 2012.

So when, moments after the London final, BBC Five Live's Sonja McLaughlan asked how "comfortable" Dobriskey felt that Çakir Alptekin, the new Olympic champion, had previously served a two-year drugs ban, she told the truth. "I'm very uncomfortable with that," she said. "I'm probably going to get in trouble for saying so, but I don't believe I'm competing on a level playing field." The then relatively new athlete biological passport scheme (ABP), designed to detect the use of banned substances by comparing multiple blood results over an extended period, would be a big step forward in the fight against doping, Dobriskey said: "But I think these Games came too soon. People will be caught eventually."

Then she went back to the athletes' village, packed her bags and headed to her parents' home in Kent. She had wanted to see her teammate Mo Farah race for his second gold the following day, "but I couldn't go back … I didn't want to be there any more."

Dobriskey didn't watch a minute more of the Olympics on TV – and still hasn't. Now living with her family in Arizona, where she co-owns a pilates studio, she even found last summer's Olympics in Paris too painful to watch. "I just had to detach myself from the sport," she says. Watching it now "makes me feel like I didn't do enough, I wasn't good enough. Should I have trained harder? Should I have done better?"

Dobriskey may have said what plenty of others were thinking, but her remarks brought a sharp and wounding backlash. Though some fellow athletes and commentators echoed her suspicions ("Hate hate hate drugs cheats #FUCKOFF" tweeted the British steeplechaser Hatti Archer), from others there was a brutal smackdown. "Don't think post-race insinuations by athletes who've been beaten achieve anything at all," sniffed the former triple jumper Jonathan Edwards.

But she would be vindicated in the end. In May 2013, Çakir Alptekin was suspended after abnormalities were detected in her blood profile dating back to 2010. After a lengthy period during which she was initially cleared by her own Turkish federation, the athlete was given an eight-year ban in 2015 and forfeited all her results from 2010 onwards – including her Olympic gold. (She would receive a life ban in 2017 after a third doping offence.)

The new champion, Bulut, upgraded from silver, didn't last long either. She had shaved 17 seconds off her personal best time in the year leading up to London; those who had been sceptical about that achievement were proved right in 2017 when she was also banned for blood passport abnormalities and had her results annulled back to 2011.

IN THE INTERIM, two further athletes from the 1500m lineup, the Belarusian Natallia Kareiva and Russia's Yekaterina Kostetskaya, had also been suspended for ABP abnormalities. Their results, in seventh and ninth place respectively, were wiped from the Olympic record.

Another athlete, Abeba Aregawi, who came fifth in 2012 racing for Ethiopia before transferring to Sweden, was also provisionally suspended in January 2016 after testing positive for the banned substance meldonium, a heart medication that can be used by athletes to improve endurance and recovery. Her ban was later lifted, as the authorities could not prove she had taken it after the date it became illegal.

Then, last September, more than 12 years after the race, there was one final twist. Tatyana Tomashova of Russia, who surged to fourth in 2012 and had since been bumped up to silver, was given a 10-year ban for using anabolic steroids, detected in retests of stored samples from 2012. Her results, too, were retrospectively wiped. The penalty came as a surprise to some, given the length of time since the London Games, but in other respects, not so much. Tomashova won silver behind Britain's Kelly Holmes in the 2004 Games in Athens, but she was absent at the 2008 Olympics in Beijing; at the time she was serving a two-year ban, handed down after her urine samples from different tournaments were found to contain more than one person's DNA.

The revised results, then, would read as follows: the original bronze medallist, Jamal, was the new Olympic champion. Aregawi, presented with a revised bronze medal in Paris last summer, would be upgraded again to silver. That meant American Shannon Rowbury, the sixth athlete to cross the line in 2012, would now be awarded bronze. Dobriskey's 10th place finish had, in fact, been a highly creditable fifth.

And for the race itself, its own ignominious reward: the title, widely attributed, of the dirtiest in sporting history.

Rowbury was on a family holiday in Ecuador when she heard she was an Olympic medallist, after a journalist texted her agent with the news. She handed the phone to her husband, she told local San Francisco media soon afterwards. “He said, ‘Shannie! Oh my God, you’re going to get bronze!’ And I just started sobbing.”

London had represented a huge opportunity for the American, who had bounced back from a disappointing Olympics in Beijing to win bronze at the 2009 world championships. “It was like, OK: now London,” she says from her present home in California. “I have one medal, I can do it again. Let’s go after it in London.”

Once standing on the start line for the final, however, the race had presented a puzzle. As she waited for the gun, Rowbury says, she was acutely conscious of the others lined up beside her who had served doping bans. Her training had taught her to focus on her own race plan, “but it was tough, because some of these athletes I had never even raced before, because they had been either banned or had just come out of the woodwork. It was confusing to try to make a strategy.”

She, too, recalls an overwhelming atmosphere in the stadium, “like nothing I’ve ever experienced before or since. Whereas Beijing and Rio were loud, it was sort of monotone, but in London the crowd, their energy, raised to an emotional crescendo as the race was going on. You could tell they were really engaged, and it just built and built. I had this out-of-body moment of, whoa, this is something special.”

Her own strengths favoured a fast race, but it didn’t work out that way. Instead, first Jamal, then Bulut, taking a quick lead, slowed the early stages almost to a jog. The tactic is often favoured by those who know they have a strong sprint finish: slowing forces their competitors either to sit behind, or burn up their own energy in a spurt to overtake.

Some athletes are naturally fast finishers; others have some help. “When you’re competing against someone who’s cheated, their bodies don’t behave the way a normal, clean body would when everybody else is fading,” Rowbury says. “They seem to have these other gears. They don’t seem to be impacted by lactic acid in the same way as everybody else, because they aren’t like everybody else. They’ve cheated.” It is striking, watching the final metres of the race, that two athletes appear almost to be accelerating in the final metres: Bulut and Tomashova.

When it was over, Rowbury went straight to her then boyfriend (now husband), the Mexican middle distance runner Pablo Solares, and sobbed. “The hardest thing wasn’t that I had missed the medal,” she says. “It was more that it felt like the race wasn’t fair, and that no matter what I could have done, I wasn’t on a level playing field. That injustice was hard for me to accept. If it was a matching of equals, I could accept that, well, today wasn’t my day. But it was very hard to accept in a scenario where I suspected people were cheating.”

The London Olympics were supposed to be the cleanest ever staged. That, at least was the pledge made by Britain’s culture

→

‘THE HARDEST THING WASN’T THAT I’D MISSED A MEDAL. IT WAS MORE THAT THE RACE WASN’T FAIR’

Track record Turkey’s Gamze Bulut, right, originally won the silver medal. Maryam Yusuf Jamal, seen here in the lead, finished third

TIM CLAYTON/CORBIS/GETTY

secretary, Jeremy Hunt, in the early days of the Games. He was right that London had put in place one of the most rigorous testing regimes of any Olympics. Multiple doping positives aren't just disastrous for the athletes and nations involved – no host country wants to be associated with them, either. A state-of-the-art testing lab, with a staff of more than 1,000, had been built for the purpose in Harlow, Essex. There, more than 5,000 tests were carried out during the event, more than any previous Games. During that time, just eight samples tested positive.

But Hunt's assertion caused even some of those inside the drug testing establishment to raise an eyebrow. With athletes' samples kept on ice and available for reanalysis for 10 years as testing technology improved, no one expected the number of athletes caught cheating in London would remain in single figures. As the same samples have been reanalysed with newer technologies in the years since, more and more doping positives have been found. By 2022, when it concluded its 10-year reanalysis programme, the International Testing Agency had withdrawn 31 London medals from athletes from 11 different countries. In one men's weightlifting event, six of the top seven finishers, including all three medallists, would be disqualified and banned for doping offences. Bronze was eventually awarded to the athlete who had originally come ninth.

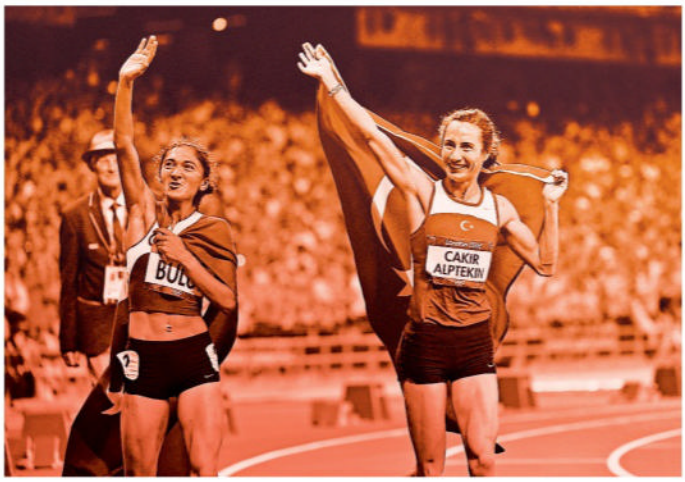
WORSE WAS TO COME.

WHEN A RUSSIAN DISCUS THROWER who had won a silver medal at London 2012, Darya Pishchalnikova, wrote to the World Anti Doping Agency (Wada) later that year, admitting she had taken banned substances and asking it to investigate systemic doping in her country, it declined to open an inquiry, instead referring her case back to the corrupt officials on whom she was attempting to blow the whistle.

Other reports in 2013 were largely met with silence from the International Olympic Committee (IOC). But it was harder to ignore a German documentary the following year featuring astonishing revelations from two Russian whistleblowers, 800m runner Yulia Stepanova and her husband, Vitaly Stepanov, a former official at Russia's drug testing agency Rusada. Up to 99% of the Russian Olympic team used banned substances, the couple told broadcaster MDR, and the country's supposed anti-doping establishment was in fact mostly concerned with covering it up. "You have to dope, that's how it works in Russia," Stepanov said. "Functionaries and coaches tell you very clearly that you can only get so far with your natural skills. In order to get medals, you need help. And that help is doping."

The head of the country's Wada-accredited national anti-doping laboratory, Grigory Rodchenkov, later fled to the US to tell his story to documentary-maker Bryan Fogel and the New York Times. The details he added were even more extraordinary, particularly about the Winter Olympics of 2014 in the Russian city of Sochi, when he was head of the laboratory coordinating testing. That allowed him to drill a tiny mousehole between the supposedly secure room in which test samples were stored overnight and his "shadow" laboratory next door.

At night, a team member would pass cheating Russian athletes' sample bottles through the mousehole; from there, a member of Russia's secret service, disguised as a plumber, would take them to its nearby command centre where the lids of supposedly unopenable



Tainted medals Gold medallist Aslı Çakir Alptekin of Turkey, right, and teammate and silver medallist Gamze Bulut celebrate after the race
BRIAN KERSEY/UPI/SHUTTERSTOCK

bottles would be removed. Back in the secret lab, the urine would then be swapped for clean samples from the athletes that had been frozen months earlier, to which Rodchenkov and his colleagues would add distilled water or salt to make them up to the right volume, before passing the resealed bottles back through the hole.

The agency charged with catching cheats, in other words, was carrying out the most audacious cheat imaginable – and without the whistleblowers, it is likely that no one would ever have known.

The revelations rocked the sporting world, and Russia was banned from the Rio and later Tokyo Olympics (the country's Olympic committee has since been suspended by the IOC due to its actions in Ukraine). But Russia's doping programme had been in place long before Sochi. In December 2016, Wada published its second major investigation into Russian doping. The country's Olympic team, Canadian lawyer Prof Richard McLaren concluded, had "corrupted the London Games on an unprecedented scale, the extent of which will probably never be fully established".

Rodchenkov would call London 2012 the "dirtiest Olympics in history" and, judging by the number of positive tests recorded, he is right. But athletics has seen successive scandals over decades, making it hard to know how many historical results could be called into question.

Under East Germany's state doping programme in the 1970s and 80s, for instance, at least 10,000 athletes were given performance-enhancing drugs, some without their knowledge. By Rodchenkov's own account, the reason his country withdrew from the 1984 Games in Los Angeles was not a snub in payback for America's absence from Moscow four years earlier, but because LA port authorities had refused to allow Russia to anchor a ship containing its own doping control lab – designed to make sure Russian athletes' urine appeared clean – in the city's docks during the competition. Unable to be sure it could hide the extent of its cheating, he said, the politburo pulled out altogether.

The Canadian sprinter Ben Johnson became perhaps the most notorious Olympic cheat after his 100m gold medal in Seoul in 1988 was annulled after three days when steroids were detected in his urine sample. The Sydney Games in 2000 were dominated by the US track star Marion Jones who won three gold medals and two bronze; she would later be stripped of them all and sentenced to six months in prison after admitting lying about using performance-enhancing drugs. Also at those Games, Lance Armstrong, fresh from winning his second Tour de France of an eventual seven, won bronze in the Olympic time trial – all later annulled in one of the biggest doping scandals in sporting history.

Wada had been established a year earlier, in 1999, to harmonise international anti-doping efforts across hundreds of sporting federations; a succession of further measures have since been introduced to help authorities in the cat-and-mouse game between dopers and testers. The "whereabouts" rule, by which elite athletes are required

‘I WAS SO NAIVE ABOUT THE WORLD OF SPORT. I WASN’T AWARE OF HOW MANY ATHLETES WOULD BE CHEATING’

to provide continual updates on where they are to facilitate surprise testing, was introduced in 2004, followed four years later by the ABP.

The Athletics Integrity Unit, an arms-length body to combat doping and corruption, was founded by the IAAF in 2017. Meanwhile, in response to the Russian revelations, the US government passed the Rodchenkov Anti-doping Act of 2019, allowing US prosecutors to pursue those engaged in international doping conspiracies.

How much of a difference have they made? It’s impossible to know for sure, says April Henning, an associate professor of international sport management at Edinburgh Heriot-Watt University. “The most sophisticated and successful doping programme in the world is the one we don’t know about,” she says. “This is the nature of anti-doping. It’s all a shot in the dark, because athletes are incentivised to do it as quietly and discreetly as possible, telling as few people as they can.” The most sophisticated anti-doping mechanisms won’t stop cheats if those involved don’t want them to, she points out. “[Russia’s doping scandal] didn’t have anything to do with the sophistication of the testing or the way it was carried out. This was a concerted effort to undermine the system, and because these people were placed where they were, with a lack of independent oversight, they got away with it.”

In 2020, after all, the former president of the IAAF was convicted of corruption by a French court and sentenced to four years in prison. Lamine Diack, a Senegalese businessman, had run the sports body for 16 years until 2015; at the same time, he had been operating a scheme he called “full protection” in which doping Russian athletes each paid hundreds of thousands of euros to make their positive drug findings disappear – so they could compete at, among other events, London 2012.

WHAT IT MEANS FOR THE MODERN-DAY ATHLETE is a non-negotiable daily ritual to comply with the bureaucracy of anti-doping. Every evening for 13 years until her retirement in 2023, British 1500m runner Laura Weightman would set an alarm at 9pm to check in with Wada’s Adams app, which she says every elite athlete has on their phone, to make sure she was where she was meant to be in case a drug tester turned up unannounced. “It’s just part of the job,” she says. “It is something you have to remember every single day, and it can be stressful if you’re travelling or have last-minute plans, but it’s your responsibility to make sure that you support the bigger global picture of clean sport.”

Weightman had just turned 21 at the London Games, her first major tournament, and hadn’t been expected to make the 1500m final but, thanks to a personal best in the semis, she fought her way to a place.

‘Justice served’ (From left) Lisa Dobriskey, who went from 10th place to 5th, Laura Weightman, who went from 11th to 6th, and Shannon Rowbury, since awarded bronze HALEY SIBLEY; FABIO DE PAOLA; WINNI WINTERMEYER

Weightman, from Alnwick in Northumberland, had been dreaming of competing in London since, as a talented teenage club runner, she had watched the televised announcement of the city’s winning bid. “I’ll never, ever forget walking out into the London stadium for my heats,” she says. “In the tunnel about to compete, I felt so overcome with emotion that I was about to achieve that childhood dream. I felt I could cry because that emotion was so overwhelming.”

With that excitement, she admits, came an innocence about some of her competitors. “I was so naive about the world of sport that I had only had a handful of experiences of even being tested. I was aware of anti-doping in sport, but I just wasn’t aware of the severity. I wasn’t aware of how many would be cheating.”

In the end, she crossed the line in 11th place – or sixth, as the records now show. At that stage, she was delighted just to have made the final. “But because of the consequences of that race, you do find it hard to trust,” she says. “You do wonder what’s happening, but you have to remember along the way, you can’t control what anyone else does. It makes you become incredibly proud of what your body can do. And to be one of the fastest in your country, one of the fastest globally on occasions, it makes you really proud to think, well, I did that clean, and I know I can say that, whereas not everyone else can.”

The new London 2012 1500m Olympic champion, Maryam Yusuf Jamal, was finally awarded the gold medal she should have won at a ceremony in Bahrain in December 2021. The presentation represented the culmination of a remarkable journey for the athlete, who was born Zenebech Tola in the Ethiopian district of Oromia in 1984. As a child, she would run 8km to school every day; by her teens she was training competitively. But, despite running very fast times, Jamal says she felt she was unfairly shut out of the national squad. “And I wanted to run.”

In 2002, while competing at one event in Lausanne, the then 18-year-old decided not to go home and instead applied for political asylum. Switzerland declined, as did the US, France, Germany and Canada, before Bahrain – eager to build athletic success – came calling. She couldn’t train there, though – it’s far too hot, she says. Instead Jamal now lives in Germany with her young family.

She laughs when asked if she knew, as she lined up for the London final, which of her competitors were likely to be doping. “Of course – every athlete knows,” she says. “You’ll see them once a year, maybe – they turn up and they go fast, even if they only run at the world championships or the Olympics. They don’t want to run the Diamond League races because they’re scared. But if you are strong, for sure, you can beat them – even with doping. I believe that. If you train hard and if you focus, you can beat them – like me.”

Like Dobriskey, Rowbury’s career ended in disappointment, after her seventh place finish in Beijing and sixth (she thought) in London was followed by a fourth in Rio in 2016. When it emerged in 2021 that Shelby Houlihan, who had beaten Rowbury’s American record at 1500m at the 2019 world championships in Doha, had tested positive for the banned steroid nandrolone, “I just felt, I cannot do this any more,” she says. “I’d been burned so many times, I couldn’t psych myself up for it.”

There has been “a lot of pain, disenchantment and disillusionment” in the years since London, she says, “but I refuse to be sad about good news. And this is good news. Even after 13 years, justice can be served.”

She hasn’t yet been told when she can expect to be awarded her bronze medal. “It won’t feel real until I hold it in my hand,” she says. “That medal is a representation of so much more.” ●

ESTHER ADDLEY IS SENIOR NEWS WRITER AT THE GUARDIAN

Food for thought

The Danish wholegrain revolution

GUARDIAN DESIGN; MEMPHISSLIM/GETTY; K-PAUL/GETTY

Is it possible to make a country healthier one slice of rye bread at a time? If the rocketing wholegrain consumption of the Danes is anything to go by, absolutely – thanks to an initiative led by government, NGOs and industry *By Rachel Dixon*

LUNCHTIME IN COPENHAGEN, DENMARK. The place is packed and staff are talking customers through the menu. Would we like slow-roasted pork with pearl barley and mushrooms? How about rye pancakes with salmon, cream cheese and avocado? I decide on beetroot tartare with horseradish and rye toasts, and a spelt side salad.

This isn't a fancy new Nordic restaurant – it's a work canteen. These chefs feed 900 workers from DSB (Danish State Railways) every weekday. As well as looking and tasting great, each dish served here contains *fuldkorn* (wholegrains), from breakfast smoothies with oats to afternoon treats such as today's wholemeal scones. There's a good reason for this: DSB recently signed up to a national programme that aims to get more wholegrains into employees.

The initiative is spearheaded by the Danish Whole Grain Partnership (DWGP), a group on a mission to make Danes healthier, one slice of rye bread at a time. Its members include the government, health NGOs (the Danish Cancer Society, the Danish Heart Foundation and the Danish Diabetes Association) and industry (bakers, food companies, supermarkets). It has been incredibly successful. When the partnership began in 2008, the average Dane ate 36g of wholegrains a day. By 2019, they were eating 82g, the highest intake in Europe. In contrast, the average Briton eats 20g a day, and one in five don't eat any wholegrains. In the US, just 15% of grain consumption comes from wholegrains (dietary guidelines recommend at least 50%).

What's so good about wholegrains? "Eating wholegrains helps to reduce your risk of cardiovascular diseases, cancer, type 2 diabetes and hypertension. They help lower your cholesterol, stabilise your blood glucose levels and improve the health

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of your gut microbiota," says Natasha Selberg of the Danish Heart Foundation. Rikke Neess, the campaign's leader, adds: "Wholegrains make you feel full, so can help prevent obesity." (Denmark has some of the lowest obesity rates in Europe.) "They add texture to your food – and taste really good."

In Denmark, there are nine recognised grains: wheat, spelt, barley, rice (brown and red), rye, oats, millet, corn (dried) and sorghum. The category may soon be expanded to include "pseudo-grains" such as quinoa, amaranth and buckwheat. Eating a grain's whole kernel, which includes the bran, germ and endosperm, means you benefit from "all the good parts", says Neess – the fibre, vitamins and minerals.

"The project started because of the [low-carbohydrate] Atkins diet, which was very popular in Denmark," Neess says. "Sales of bread were decreasing. At the same time, there was increasing evidence that wholegrains decreased the risk of cancer."

One of the Whole Grain Partnership's first moves was to create an orange logo for products high in wholegrains. In 2010, 190 products carried the symbol; by 2019, it was 1,097. In a 2024 survey, seven out of 10 Danes recognised it. "The logo makes it really easy for consumers to choose wholegrains," says Neess. "We've also had a very positive response from industry. It gives them a competitive advantage to have the logo on their products." Selberg adds: "This logo gives producers an incentive to develop and reformulate healthy products." According to a 2022 report from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), these products are no more expensive than their refined grain equivalents.

▼ **First class** The DSB canteen in Copenhagen offers a healthy menu to Danish State Railways staff VALDEMAR REN

The government has supported the initiative by updating official dietary guidelines. In 2009, it recommended four servings of wholegrains a day. In 2013, it set a more specific target of at least 75g a day, and in June last year that was increased to 90g.

I visit Lantmännen Schulstad, the biggest producer of rye bread. "Rye bread has been part of our culture for 1,000 years," says Neess. But young people are choosing white bagels, wraps and burger buns over boring old rye bread. In response, Lantmännen Schulstad is bringing out new shapes and sizes that are more convenient for children's lunch boxes. "We have to make rye bread great again," jokes Neess.

Pernille Bang-Löwgren, Lantmännen Schulstad's chief executive, shows me a table heaped with different breads. They are set out in varying amounts, illustrating how much of each type you'd need to get your daily wholegrain quota. Dark rye bread? Just four small slices. White rolls? You'd have to munch your way through a towering pile of 50.

For some people, that knowledge is enough to make them choose the rye bread. But many others base their choice on taste, or price, or what the kids will eat, and may even be put off by a virtue-signalling wholegrain logo. For that reason, the partnership has encouraged producers to put a little bit of wholegrain flour in all their products, even the white sliced bread. Most started with 3% – nowhere near enough to see or taste – and are increasing very gradually: 5%, 7%, maybe as much 9%. These stealth wholegrains are listed in the ingredients, but not trumpeted anywhere else on the label. This tactic is aimed at the 6% of Danes who eat less than 25g of wholegrains a day. "We have to get the people who eat the least amount to eat more," says Selberg.

At Valsemøllen, a Danish bakery founded in 1899, I bake bread with Erik Olsen. We're experimenting by making sourdough with different ratios of wholegrain flour, from zero to 90%. It is surprising how little difference it makes to the appearance, texture or taste – even Olsen, who has been baking since he was 13, is taken aback. If you like the tang of white sourdough, you could probably switch to 75% wholegrain and barely notice.

Olsen has also baked some cinnamon buns with 25% wholegrains. Adding a percentage of wholegrain flour into cakes is another easy way to up people's intake. Sweet treats don't get the wholegrain logo – products have to meet official guidelines on sugar, salt and fat, too – but adding wholegrains can make them a bit healthier. The same goes for ultra-processed packaged food, says Selberg. "The fibre, vitamins and minerals in ultra-processed rye bread may be more important than the additives, which may just help the bread last longer."

The Whole Grain Partnership runs events to raise awareness. On National Whole Grain Day in January, there are activities such as cooking, baking, singing and playing games in schools, libraries and hospitals; this year a prison took part. Supermarkets run special offers on wholegrain products. "It's a day with so much positivity, happiness and community," says Neess. There is also a *smørrebrød* (open sandwich) week in June, a breakfast week in September and a new dinner week in November. "Most Danes get wholegrains at breakfast and lunch, but not many get so much in the evening," says Selberg. "Our new campaign focuses on dinner: wholegrain pasta, rice and bread."

I ask Neess how she gets her 90g a day. "I always eat oatmeal with blueberries and almonds for breakfast, a piece of rye bread for lunch, and focus on wholegrains at dinner – pasta, rice, pizza – with lots of veg," she says. "I really like crispbread as a snack in the afternoon."

The EU and the OECD have awarded the partnership best-practice status for promoting public health, in 2019 and 2022 respectively. The OECD report said: "Given there is strong evidence to support the link between high wholegrain consumption and lower risk of developing certain cancers (eg colorectal cancer), type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular diseases, the DWGP plays an important role in improving population health."

▲ **Great Danes** Loaves of bread containing different percentages of wholegrain at the Valsemøllen bakery VALDEMAR REN

How easy is it to change the diet of an entire nation? "It's very difficult to change eating habits on a population level," says Selberg. "You need industry partners who can increase the availability of wholegrain products and reformulate recipes to increase the amount of wholegrain. You have to ensure customers can make healthy choices in supermarkets, and increase consumer awareness and demand." Neess agrees that the most important thing is availability: "It should be easy to make a wholegrain choice everywhere we go." We stroll around Copenhagen, popping into shops and supermarkets. The wholegrain logo is everywhere: on bread, cereal, pasta, rice, biscuits, snacks …

Neess stresses the importance of cooperation. "We want to increase public health, but that's a difficult task for only one partner to achieve. But when we work closely together, we can make it happen. There is very high trust among the partners," she says. "Not all countries can work together with government. It's not a political project. Leftwing and rightwing governments have all been very supportive."

"Our public/private partnership is a very Danish thing, and it's very successful," adds Selberg. "Most of Europe is moving more to the right. Politicians are not allowed to decide what's on people's plates."

Indeed, Denmark is leading the way with this kind of alliance. In October 2023, the country drew up the world's first action plan for plant-based food, an unlikely agreement between farmers, politicians and environmental groups, aimed at reducing meat consumption for environmental as well as health reasons. Wholegrains are a part of this – they are filling but require far less water, land or energy to produce than meat or dairy. "Wholegrains have a low carbon footprint," says Neess. "Only 25% of Danes are aware of that."

The partnership is now trying to spread the wholegrain word beyond Denmark. "We're part of the Fortified Whole Grain Alliance, a Rockefeller-funded project trying to increase wholegrain consumption in Africa," says Neess. "We also have partnerships in Germany and Japan, and we've just launched a partnership with Sweden." The International Whole Grain Summit was held in Detmold, Germany, last month, advocating for refined grains to be replaced by wholegrains over the next few years.

How can other countries follow in Denmark's footsteps? "Small steps. The food industry should look at what people eat and increase the amount of wholegrain gradually: 3%, 5% etc," says Neess. "You could make a lasagne with 50% wholewheat pasta, 50% white."

On my last day in Copenhagen, I have breakfast at my hotel. It's easy to choose wholegrains: a bowl of oatmeal with fruit, rye toast with hummus, a wholemeal pastry. They fill me up for a morning of sightseeing – and, as Neess promised, they taste really, really good ●

RACHEL DIXON WORKS ON TRAVEL AND FEATURES AT THE GUARDIAN

A pastry pilgrimage
Why bakery tourists will travel miles for a croissant

By *Chris Marshall*

JUST ONE DAY into a 360km hike across the width of Scotland last August, Dan Warren was feeling the burn, his old trail shoes wearing painfully thin. But neither sore feet nor swarms of midges would stop the librarian and his scientist wife, Dee Johnson, from reaching their goal: the promise of pastries at the Bakehouse in the west coast fishing town of Mallaig, a 14-day trek plus two ferry hops away from their home near Montrose.

The pair are so-called "bakery pilgrims", travelling significant distances in the pursuit of a fine loaf or bun. "Some of the time we were pushing through overgrown tracks, and there were lots of bogs," Warren says of their journey. But their reward was a soft brioche bun, filled with creme patissiere and finished with crumble and berries.

I can relate. The siren call of the honey buns at Popty'r Dref bakery in Dolgellau, Wales, drew my wife and me from Oxfordshire, nearly four hours away. We tagged on a hike up Snowdon (Yr Wyddfa), but it was really just a scenic spot to enjoy our bakery haul.

A couple of weeks ago, my family and I also travelled an hour or so to sample the babkas and honey croissants at Farro bakery in Bristol. Not long before that, it was a rhubarb-cardamom-brioche concoction at Pobl bakery in Talgarth Mill, near Hay-on-Wye.

But it turns out we are amateurs among hardened bakery tourists. Professional cyclist Maddy Nutt often plans long-distance routes around the promise of a croissant or a pain au chocolat. "I'll go out of my way to get to the best bakeries," she says, recounting a recent five-hour endurance ride from London to Ramsgate's Staple Stores. A puncture meant she arrived three minutes before it closed. She spent £3 ($4) on a charity shop rucksack and took home what remained of the bakery's daily output.

In the UK, you rarely need to travel far to find a bakery. Greggs has more than 2,600 outlets. Gail's, the chain associated with high-street gentrification, now has 170 branches. A pack of two croissants from a Tesco bakery costs £1.75.

But it is the rarer treats that attract the bakery tourists. Usually, these are created by small operations, run by an owner-baker from a single site. Many pride themselves on using sustainable ingredients, such as flour sourced from regenerative farming. The pastries are often an upmarket twist on the classics, as is the case with a kimchi

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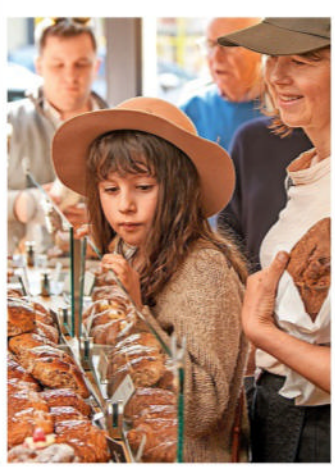

▶ **Pick and choose** Cecilia Burgess and daughter Bella at Bath bakery Landrace ADRIAN SHERRATT

▲ **First cut** Customers at Toad bakery in Camberwell, south London, can face hour-long queues

TOAD

▲ **Corner shop** Long Boi's Bakehouse in Levenshulme, Manchester, was formerly an off-licence

LONG BOI'S

and egg danish at Long Boi's Bakehouse in Levenshulme, Manchester, and a spiral-shaped miso bacon escargot from London's Arôme.

Journeying to a far-flung bakery obviously carries a carbon cost, but for many people this kind of travel has replaced other holidays or breaks they would have taken. There are plenty of social media influencers on the hunt for pretty pastries to gorge their feeds, but bakery wanderlust is bigger than that. In Korea, they have a word for the trend: "*bbangjisullae*" is a portmanteau of "*bbang*" meaning "bread" and "*seongjisullae*" meaning "pilgrimage". Koreans, it seems, are increasingly prepared to travel to try the country's best bakeries; some take overnight trains for fear of missing the morning's supply.

On a bright Saturday morning at Bath bakery Landrace, pilgrims share the queue with local residents. "They all come for the cinnamon buns," says manager Charlotte Briggs. At £4 apiece, these fragrant, springy coils have kept a spot on the counter since the shop opened in 2019.

Lycra-clad couple Tomos Owens and Hetty Niblett cycled nearly two hours to visit. "I just love croissants," says Owens. "We've been out here in line when it has been -3C in winter." The pair are trying as many spots as they can from the book Britain's Best Bakeries, which was published last year.

MOTHER AND DAUGHTER Chie and Karin Takita, from Ibaraki in Japan, included Landrace in their UK itinerary after Karin spotted its creations on Instagram. The pair came away with an appreciation for hot cross buns – "So good!" – despite Chie's previous belief that British buns are "dry".

Cecilia Burgess, sitting outside the bakery with her nine-year-old daughter, Bella, first heard about another popular spot, Lovingly Artisan in Kendal, Cumbria, when it was voted among the best in the UK by British Baker magazine. "I drove for more than an hour from my parents' home in Barnard Castle, across the Pennines. Everyone thought I was mad. To me, it was worth it!" At Landrace, Burgess's favourite is an Italian-style croissant, with a filling of cream blended with pistachios that are roasted in-house.

But there are few bakeries that have drawn more tourists than Lannan in Edinburgh. Since opening in Stockbridge in July 2023, the shop has developed a cult-like following. "People travel from all over the world. It's mind-blowing for me," says baker-patron Darcie Maher. "We just had someone who had come from Canada to try the bakery. There was someone from New Zealand last year who booked their trip around coming to Lannan."

Maher cringes at any association with being a "viral bakery", but she has become something of a star. Many bakery devotees are quick to reel off names of who owns which bakehouse, and where they worked previously.

"I feel like I've been to Lannan just from seeing it on social media," says Megan Hermes, who lives in Guildford, Surrey. She has yet to make the trip to Stockbridge, but she is happy to put in the miles for a good pastry. What started as a way for the local government worker to treat herself at the end of a 25km run has become a plan to criss-cross the country, combining bakery visits with weekends away. "I'm not into a beer crawl but I am up for a bakery crawl," she says. That has sometimes meant queueing for the best part of an hour at sites such as south London's Toad bakery, home to a sought-after yuzu-orange jaffa cake.

Bakeries can be pricey: at Landrace, the sausage roll will set you back £5. But these treats are cheaper than a restaurant meal, or some of the other experiences that people have tended to travel for in the past.

Milly Kenny-Ryder, author of Britain's Best Bakeries, planned a trip to visit Dublin's Scéal with her husband and child – only to realise after booking flights that it had moved outside the city. The extra train journey didn't deter her. "It was torrential rain; we all turned up in soggy socks. But it was worth the visit." A long queue doesn't faze her, either: she waited for more than an hour at Eric's, the London bakery whose recent creations include a lime and mascarpone mousse pastry.

IN FEBRUARY, Evie Clement from Somerset went to Paris to seek out the best bakeries. Stops included Land&Monkeys, Leonie and Café Nuances, where she tried an "amazing" pain suisse. In the UK, Clement has hopped on the bus with her brother, Guy, for the 40-minute journey to have baked goods at Bristol's East Village cafe.

For bakers, renown can bring pressures. When Lannan first opened, says Maher, "we were busier than I expected. I was working 120 hours a week and sleeping on a foam mattress in the basement of the bakery."

Thankfully, Lannan has now grown from two to 10 bakers. There have been rumours that some of the most sought-after bakeries deliberately limit supply, creating an artificial scarcity to push up the hype factor – but this seems absurd to Maher, who has spoken about maxing out the bakery's oven capacity. Lannan is staffed seven days a week, despite only being open to customers Wednesday to Sunday.

A willingness to follow the breadcrumbs across the map comes from an appreciation of just how difficult it is to achieve baked nirvana. Many bakery tourists are home cooks who appreciate the chasm between their banana bread and the intricate hazelnut and vanilla poached pear danish from London's Fortitude Bakehouse or the perfectly constructed rosemary and sea salt twists at Mabel in Norfolk.

Whether it's on your street or halfway across the country, that moment when you step outside a bakery, open your brown paper bag and sample the goods inside is always a promising start to the day.●

CHRIS MARSHALL IS A WRITER BASED IN OXFORDSHIRE, ENGLAND

Comment is free, facts are sacred CP Scott 1918

JULIAN COMAN

Will Francis's compassionate legacy endure?

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Opinion

UNITED STATES

Tyrants like Trump always fall – and we can already predict how

Simon Tisdall

ILLUSTRATION: GUARDIAN DESIGN; JEWEL SAMAD; GETTY; ALLAN SWART/GETTY

Tyrants come to a sticky end, or so history suggests. Richard III and Coriolanus made bloody exits. More recently, Saddam Hussein went to the gallows, Slobodan Milosevic went to jail, Bashar al-Assad went into exile. Libya's Muammar Gaddafi was run to ground in a sewer. Tyranny, from the Greek *túrannos* ("absolute ruler"), is typically fuelled by *hubris* and leads ineluctably to *nemesis*. Tyrants are for toppling. Their downfall is a saving grace.

Tyranny, in its many forms, is back in vogue, and everyone knows who's to blame. To be fair, to suggest similarities between the aforementioned abominable individuals and Donald Trump would be utterly wrong. In key respects, he's worse. Measured by willingness and capacity to harm the world's poorest and most vulnerable, wreak global economic mayhem and threaten nuclear annihilation, Trump is uniquely dangerous – and ever more so by the day.

In any notional league of tyranny, Trump tops the table, with Russia's Vladimir Putin following closely in his rear. If these two narcissists formed a partnership, it could be called Monsters R US. Across a disordered globe, wannabe "strongmen" queue to join their club.

Yet like every tyrant, old and new, Trump must fall. How may nemesis be peacefully and swiftly attained? As he marked 100 days back in power this week, such questions gain urgency. Can the 47th president's premeditated swinging of a wrecking ball at US democracy, laws, values and dreams be halted? How may what remains of the international rules-based system be salvaged? Who or what will dethrone him?

Policy failures and personal misconduct do not usually collapse a presidency. The US constitution is inflexible: incompetence is protected; cupidity has a fixed term. Trump is in power until 2029 unless impeached – third time lucky? – for "high crimes and misdemeanors", or else deemed unfit under section 4 of the 25th amendment. With JD Vance, his yes-man Veep, playing Oval Office bouncer and Congress awash with Maga converts, such defenestration appears unlikely.

Public backing is certainly slipping. Last month's nationwide demonstrations, worries about inflation and savings, and anger over federal funding cuts and mass firings reflect deepening alarm about threats to a way of life. Polls show Trump losing middle-of-the-roaders whose votes ended the Biden interregnum. Yet despite a royal resemblance to another "tyrant", King George III, a second American revolution is a long way off.

> *Of the seven deadly sins – pride, greed, lust, envy, gluttony, wrath, sloth – Trump is comprehensively guilty*

Many look to the courts for rescue. Judges continue to challenge Trump's diktats on deportations and other issues. It was a New York jury that convicted Trump of 34 felonies last year, but sadly failed to jail him. His businesses are repeatedly accused of fraud. Now it is suggested the supreme court-tested "major questions doctrine" could bring him to heel. This requires the government to demonstrate a "clear congressional authorisation" when it makes decisions of great "economic and political significance", explained US law professor Aaron Tang. It's restraint of sorts.

In the land of Watergate, will the media bring the tyrant low? It's a fond hope. Major news organisations, undercut by social media and tsunamis of official lies, are derided from on high as liberal purveyors of "fake news". They face costly legal challenges and outright bans. Basic concepts of objective reporting are torched as the White House favours rightwing, pro-Trump outlets. The free press, perforce, is not so much cowed as cautious.

This fight has moral and ethical aspects, too – and, given this is the US, prayer is a powerful weapon in the hands of those who would slay evil-doers. Of the seven deadly sins – vainglory or pride, greed or covetousness, lust, envy, gluttony, wrath, sloth – Trump is comprehensively, mortally guilty. In Isaiah (13:11), the Lord gives fair warning: "I will put an end to the pride of the arrogant and humiliate the insolence of tyrants." God knows, maybe he'll listen. Miracles do happen.

Of all the tools in the tyrant-toppling toolbox, none are so potentially decisive as those supplied by Trump's own stupidity. Most people understand how worthless a surrender monkey "peace deal" is that rewards Putin and betrays Ukraine. Does Trump seriously believe his support for mass murder in Gaza, threats to attack Iran and reckless bombing of Yemen will end the Middle East conflict and win him a Nobel peace prize?

By almost every measure, Trump's chaotic tariff war is hurting American consumers, damaging businesses and reducing US influence. It's a boon to China and an attack on longtime allies and trading partners such as Britain. Trump's big tech boosters know this to be so, as do many Republicans. But they dare not speak truth to power.

And then there's his greed – the shameless money-grubbing that has already brought accusations of insider trading, oligarchic kleptocracy, and myriad conflicts of interest unpoliced by the 17 government oversight watchdogs Trump capriciously fired. His relatives and businesses are again pursuing foreign sweetheart deals. Corruption on this scale cannot pass unchallenged indefinitely. Avarice alone may be Trump's undoing.

✻ **Simon Tisdall** *is a Guardian foreign affairs commentator*

All this points to one conclusion: as a tyrant, let alone as president, Trump is actually pretty useless – and as his failures, frustrations and fantasies multiply, he will grow ever more dangerously unstable. Trump's biggest enemy is Trump. Those who would save the US and themselves – at home and abroad – must employ all democratic means to contain, deter, defang and depose him. But right now, the best, brightest hope is that, drowning in hubris, Trump will destroy himself ●

FAMILY

We'll never have the luxury of the Clooneys' argument-free life

Rachel Connolly

▲ Never a cross word between Amal and George Clooney

GILBERT CARRASQUILLO/GC IMAGES; GUARDIAN DESIGN

Somebody give George Clooney a medal. In a recent interview with CBS, the actor claimed he has never, in 11 years of marriage, argued with his wife, the human rights lawyer Amal Clooney. Let's just accept it to be true that you can be married to a lawyer for more than a decade and never find yourself in an argument. And in this case, I suppose, why should it not be? These are some of the most beautiful people in the world. On top of this, they are extremely rich. They can have houses and holidays wherever they want. They can buy whatever clothes and dinners they choose. What would you have to argue about if you lived such a gilded existence?

And actually, I do find myself wondering about that quite often these days, especially when I see the strange spectacle of enormously wealthy and successful celebrities arguing with strangers online. Maybe the fact this does happen is evidence that, for some people, even in a life with no material problems, artificial grievances can always be invented. Still, I can dream that I would not end up like that, and that if I was that rich, I would never argue. In fact, I simply would not have a phone. I would live a life surrounded only by beauty. I would buy new socks and new peach silk underwear every day. I would spend every minute of my days smiling calmly. And if I did run into problems with my partner, I would simply employ someone – let's call them a relationship tension expert – to work things out on my behalf.

Until that day, though, arguments are part of life. Most of us, with our lumpen faces and bodies, our fragile bank balances, our bobbled polyester clothing and our strained sleep schedules, argue with our partners with some degree of regularity. But I don't think that's necessarily a bad thing. As long as nobody is using physical force or other forms of intimidation or manipulation, such as fake tears, or other forms of cruelty, such as lying, I think an argument can be a very productive tool in a relationship.

As a straight woman living in a society that tends to teach men from a young age that household chores are beneath them, for example, I have always advocated for arguing ferociously about chores and tidiness from the very start of a relationship. Let no infraction pass, no matter how small. An unwiped counter should be met with a great tirade about not feeling understood and loved and having your personhood squashed and so on. Gentle nagging won't do. The more melodramatic, the better. No sane person would rather have an argument like this than wipe the counter. In my experience, if you have this argument on a grand enough scale, you need only have it once. It's either that, or wipe the counter and clean the fridge shelves and put someone else's underwear in the wash basket for ever, gently nagging all the while. I made my choice long ago and never looked back.

✻ **Rachel Connolly** *is a writer and novelist*

There are other things I have learned about arguments in relationships over the years.

If you tell your partner calmly that something is annoying or upsetting and they continue to do it anyway, they are doing it on purpose. Use that information how you will.

Another thing: you can never have a productive argument with someone when you don't agree on the basic facts of what happened. And I don't mean how people felt about things – I mean if one person says the car crashed and the other says it didn't. An argument about that will never end. And you should never agree that you saw a car crash when you didn't, or vice versa, for the sake of your own sanity, as well as the other person's. Agreeing with someone else's fantasy to placate them is a very dangerous thing to do, because it makes a fantasy feel real. I learned a simple strategy for this a little while ago. Now I just say: "We are living in different realities. We cannot have a productive conversation about this until that changes."

In general, if you have had the same argument again and again, you will have it again and again and again. One of you can change, or one of you can accept that things won't change. Or you can argue about it for ever. There are no other options. And arguing about something for ever is a bad option.

When it comes down to it, then, I am a strong advocate for making your red lines known clearly and then walking away if they are crossed.

I can't have my relationship tension expert or my daily fresh silk underwear, but I can have a relatively peaceful life all the same ●

POPE FRANCIS

ILLUSTRATION: GUARDIAN DESIGN; DIOGENES SANTANA DA SILVA/GETTY

The conclave's choice is clear: uphold Francis's legacy or roll back on it

Julian Coman

For Catholics who cherished Pope Francis's relentless defence of the dignity of migrants and minorities, the footage of his deeply awkward meeting with JD Vance on Easter Sunday made for unsettling viewing. Here, looming over him on what turned out to be the eve of his death, was the White House embodiment of the insular, bullying politics he spent so much energy fighting against.

What now? The pope "from the ends of the earth" was laid to rest last Saturday in an unadorned tomb in Rome's Santa Maria Maggiore basilica, after a funeral attended by about 50 heads of state and 130 delegations from around the world. Progressives inside and outside the church will hope that encounter with the US vice-president was not an ominous portent.

The antipathy shown by US Catholic conservatives towards Francis has been virulent, extreme and, at times, close to schismatic. Arch-traditionalists and historic antagonists such as Donald Trump's religious cheerleader, Cardinal Raymond Burke, will see the coming papal conclave as an opportunity to stage a full-blown counter-revolution in the Vatican. How Vance and the Maga movement's other swaggering Catholic blowhard, Steve Bannon, would love that.

After a decade in which secular western politics has drifted steadily to the authoritarian right, could Rome now take the religious version of the same route, rolling back Franciscan reforms such as the introduction of blessings for same-sex couples? The answer is probably not. But it is not by any means certain that Francis's progressive legacy is entirely safe.

In order to promote the outward-facing spirit of his papacy, and reflect his conviction that the global south should carry more weight and influence in 21st-century Catholicism, the first Latin American pope ensured that the cardinals choosing his successor will be the most diverse group in church history. This influx from what Francis called "the peripheries" will make an always

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unpredictable voting process still more unreadable. But it also represents a significant recalibration of ecclesiastical power away from the rich west.

Such a rebalancing does not necessarily translate to an automatic boost for progressive forces in the conclave. On issues relating to sexuality, "gender ideology", abortion and the family, many African and Asian prelates have more in common with the "illiberal Christianity" of Viktor Orbán's Hungary.

Anti-Francis theological hardliners could benefit from that. But a more globally representative electorate means that to become "papabile", a candidate will need to share the late pope's focus on global inequality, the rights of the poorest nations and the climate emergency. A less western conclave should equally guarantee continuing empathy with the fate of millions of migrants.

In the medium term, Francis's empowerment of the laity and the grassroots of the church will also complicate any back-to-the future restoration project. The "synod on synodality" was burdened with a terrible name, and liberal-minded Catholics have been severely disappointed by a lack of progress on issues such as female deacons. But by convening this vast deliberation on the future of the church – in which women voted for the first time alongside clerics on the way forward – Francis cunningly embedded a more open, inclusive culture at the heart of Catholicism. That momentum will be difficult for a new pope to uproot and defy.

In truth, though, the post-Francis future can only be viewed against a backdrop already transformed by the impact of the second Trump presidency. Francis was a fierce critic of the global economic culture that legitimised the restless, amoral profit-seeking of capital, as it sought to undermine every human, environmental and territorial limit to its ambition. But amid the ethnocentric, nationalist backlash to globalisation, he was also called to defend the suddenly endangered postwar architecture of international law and universal human rights. As a new authoritarian era apparently takes shape, the late pope's English biographer, Austen Ivereigh, has compared the challenges his successor will face to those facing the papacy of Pius XI 100 years ago.

✻ **Julian Coman** *is a Guardian associate editor*

Francis's gut response to the crisis was to champion a spirit and ethic of catholicity, in the widest sense of the word. This radically pastoral approach was encapsulated in his repeated insistence that the church should be open to "*todos, todos, todos*". But that missionary advocacy of inclusivity applied to the secular world as well. In February, it formed the substance of his extraordinary indirect rebuke of Vance, after he had the temerity to cite Catholic doctrine on love as a justification for summary deportations and cuts to US international aid.

In his coruscating letter to US bishops, which would become his last major intervention, Francis wrote: "What is built on the basis of force, and not on the truth about the equal dignity of every human being, begins badly and will end badly." That act of witness should be the starting point of the next pontificate, if the Catholic church is to fulfil its true vocation in the age of Trump ●

Would Joan Didion have welcomed the publication of her therapy notes?

Joan Didion entered the fray on the publication of Ernest Hemingway's unfinished final manuscript in an essay titled Last Words in 1998: "You think something is in shape to be published or you don't, and Hemingway didn't," she wrote. You believe a writer's unpublished work is fair game after their death or you don't, and Didion – it would seem – didn't.

Debate about the ethics of posthumous publication has been ignited once more, this time with Didion at its centre. After the writer's death in 2021, about 150 pages were found in a file next to her desk. These were meticulous accounts of sessions with her psychiatrist, from 1999 to 2003, focused mainly on her adopted daughter Quintana, who was spiralling into alcoholism. Addressed to her husband, screenwriter John Gregory Dunne, this journal has been published under the title Notes to John. "No restrictions were put on access," we are told in a brief, anonymous introduction, presumably the ghostly hand of her literary estate.

The history of posthumous works is a long and contentious one, from Virgil's Aeneid to the publication of Gabriel García Márquez's Until August last year. Márquez's sons excused their "act of betrayal" in publishing this abandoned novel against the Nobel laureate's wishes as a service to his readers. In 2009, Vladimir Nabokov's son published his father's incomplete last work, The Original of Laura, 30 years after his death, despite his instructions that the novel be destroyed.

Harper Lee's "lost" manuscript Go Set a Watchman caused a sensation when it was published in 2015. Lee was 89 and in very poor health. But the critical verdict on all these recent "rediscoveries" was that the authors had good reasons not to want them published.

However, it is not always a case of publish and be damned. Most famously, we would not have Kafka's The Trial had his executor, Max Brod, not ignored his demand that it be burned.

Henry James made a "gigantic bonfire" of his archive. Thomas Hardy followed suit. Philip Larkin's diaries were committed to a shredding machine and then the University of Hull's boiler house. "What he wished to be remembered would be remembered," Larkin wrote of Hardy. "What he wished forgotten would be forgotten."

How much of Notes to John was meant to be forgotten? Didion wrote two memoirs: The Year of Magical Thinking, after Dunne's sudden death in 2003, and, later, Blue Nights, about her relationship with Quintana, who died in 2005 at the age of 39. In both, her daughter's addiction is gracefully elided.

It seems unlikely that Didion, that most reticent of people and most exacting of writers, would have welcomed these intimate, unedited journals seeing the light of day. But it is implausible that she would have been unaware of the inevitability of their publication. In Notes for John we see Didion bare-faced. We see her pain. But still she remains an enigma ●

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University clampdown spreads beyond Harvard
Adam Gabbatt's article on Trump's move to starve Harvard of funds unless it complies with his controlling agenda seems part of what may become a global move on academia (Harvard v Trump, Spotlight, 25 April).

On my own campus, this has begun already through stealth with the complicity of a weak-kneed campus administration. A new rightwing government following our coming national election could see similar attempts to starve our universities of funds unless they restrict critical thinking to a meaningless whisper.

The University of Sydney, which last year saw a peaceful encampment in sympathy with the Palestinian people supported by a group of anti-Zionist Jewish students, has at this stage moved to stifle such anti-war protests.

The university has moved to adopt a new definition of antisemitism, equating it with any criticism of Zionism, in order to invoke disciplinary proceedings when it considers students on campus are challenging, in effect, the university's political viewpoints.
Byron Comninos
Waverley, NSW, Australia

The pope who connected human and natural worlds
Pope Francis was, as your editorial (Guardian View, 25 April) reminds us, "engaged with the world and its crises".

Laudato si': an encyclical letter on ecology and climate, published in 2015, contains in its six brief chapters all any lay person would want to hear on the interrelationship of economics, environmental destruction, global heating and poverty.

"The human environment and the natural environment deteriorate together," he wrote in the first chapter.

Despair, not hope, lurks on many pages. "The most we can hope for is superficial rhetoric, sporadic acts of philanthropy and perfunctory expressions of concern for the environment … still less is there room for the globalisation of indifference."

What has changed in the 10 years since he wrote these words?
Pat Baskett
Albany, New Zealand

We need to up our game to monitor global free trade
Free trade is a wonderful thing, but only if you manage an overall fair and reasonable balance of trade with your trading partners (How China prepped for chaos, Big story, 18 April).

If one country assumes dominance, free trade can get nasty. It's a game of eternal vigilance that many countries have not been playing carefully enough. Soon, one player is controlling a very large range of products. Oh, and look out, they've upped their foreign currency reserves and intellectual property obtained, it would seem, by whatever means are at hand.

How shortsighted those trade deals have been. And to boot, we have put a fool in charge who is making things infinitely worse. Our politicians are more interested in getting elected than monitoring our trading position.

This is serious. It's time to lift our game.
David Catchlove
Newport, NSW, Australia

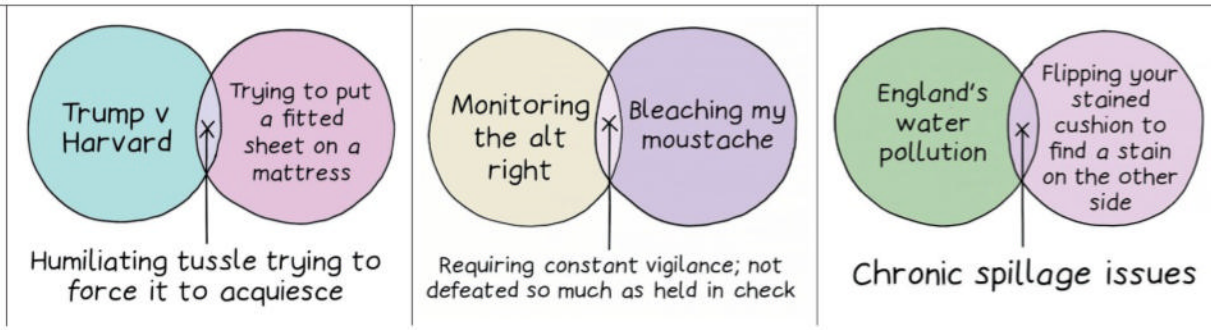
The delight of a favourite William Morris design
When my wife, Helen, was dying last year, it was thought we could get carers and have her at home instead of hospital. I told her I was buying new curtains and ordered some with William Morris's Strawberry Thief design to be made at Cae Du Designs in Harlech (William Morris prints are everywhere. He would be thrilled and appalled, the Guardian View, 18 April).

There they are in the room where she would have died. She never came home, so she never saw them, but was overjoyed that I'd ordered her favourite Morris design for her. When I look at them, I think of her exclaiming her delight, and so I'm grateful to William Morris.
John P Butler
Pwllheli, Wales, UK

Forget your US trip: stay home or come to Canada
John Harris is making selfish excuses (Donald Trump won't stop me visiting the US – a country I love, Opinion, 11 April). Trump may not be America, but America is (currently) Trump's. Those who go there, or who buy their products or services, validate what he has done. Only strict boycott – no travel, no buying their goods – will make them take notice. And if you want to explore North America, freedom, cool music or whatever, come to Canada. We value your presence and custom.
Christian Ensslin
Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, Canada

Take a break from coffee and spend it on a paper
When someone complains about the price of newspapers, I say it's less than a cup of coffee (Smell the coffee: why my flat white is a tiny hit of joy in a dark world, Opinion, 25 April)!
Terry Bates
London, England, UK

A WEEK IN VENN DIAGRAMS
Edith Pritchett


Trump v Harvard
Trying to put a fitted sheet on a mattress
Humiliating tussle trying to force it to acquiesce
Monitoring the alt right
Bleaching my moustache
Requiring constant vigilance; not defeated so much as held in check
England's water pollution
Flipping your stained cushion to find a stain on the other side
Chronic spillage issues

SCREEN

How to save ailing TV superfranchises

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Culture

Barrie Kosky put Carmen in a gorilla suit and had Das Rheingold's Erda represented by an 82-year-old naked woman. What does he plan for Die Walküre?

Ring leader

Dark places Barrie Kosky's Das Rheingold at the Royal Opera House in 2023

MONIKA RITTERSHAUS/ ROYAL OPERA HOUSE

▲ **Spirit level** Benjamin Hulett as the High Priest in Barrie Kosky's production of Saul by Handel at Glyndebourne in 2015
TRISTRAM KENTON

INTERVIEW
By Fiona Maddocks

From the Muppet Show to Kafka, Yiddish theatre to Vivaldi, pop music to Wagner – Barrie Kosky's enthusiasms ricochet at a speed that leaves you dizzy as well as, in their rampant variety, a touch envious. This 58-year-old Australian theatre and opera director sees all art, all life, as one. His love of clowns, cabaret and musicals is as intense as his passion for theatre and grand opera. "Whether it touches the soul is all that matters," he says, his loquacious personality expanding into a small side office at the Royal Opera House in London. His new staging of Die Walküre, the second opera in Wagner's Ring cycle, opened this week.

Kosky was born in Melbourne but has been based in Berlin for the past 20 years, where he was artistic director of the Komische Oper and still has an association there. He is funny, clever, outrageous but above all serious. His productions may shock, though that is never his intention. Dressing up his Carmen in a gorilla suit for a production that now has cult status in Frankfurt and Copenhagen – but did not catch light with audiences in London – was part of a studied aesthetic: the heroine living her brief life through a set of extreme roles. In his Das Rheingold, the first part of the Ring, which opened in 2023, he caused upset in some quarters by having Erda – mother Earth – represented by a naked 82-year-old woman.

"How can Earth, dreaming and witnessing this story, not be in her own bare skin?" he says. "There is nothing more beautiful than watching older people on stage. It almost reduces me to tears, thinking about what their bodies have experienced, their histories. If people don't like it, that's their problem. After 35 years of working in opera, I am experienced enough to understand that if you put something out there for artistic reasons, there will be negative reactions. People have paid for tickets. They can have any reaction they want. It's never about saying: 'Hey, this will really annoy the Royal Opera audience.'"

Describing himself as a cocktail of Russian, Polish, Hungarian and English as well as Australian, Kosky has explored his origins in his work, from youthful endeavours in Australia to a career spanning the world's major opera houses (his acclaimed production of Handel's Saul returns to Glyndebourne this summer).

His capacious tastes are given full rein in a short memoir published in 2008, called On Ecstasy. In a few heady pages, he describes his childhood yearning for his Polish grandmother's chicken soup, his Hungarian grandmother's love of opera, his gay awakening in the school changing rooms, and his experience of being dumbstruck by Mahler and emotionally drugged by the "phantasmagoria" of Wagner.

The question is how he continues to be so drawn to that composer, whose writings and works are rife with antisemitic tropes. This is Kosky's second tilt at the Ring cycle. The first, completed in 2011, was in Hanover. He has also worked at Wagner's festival theatre of Bayreuth in Bavaria, where he directed Die Meistersinger, featuring a giant puppet and a backdrop of the Nuremberg trials. But for a UK audience, his attitude is different.

"I do believe people can appreciate Wagner above all for the music," he says. "I have no problem with that. However, as a Jew and as a director, I don't have that luxury. I'm dealing with the text, and how to interpret that text. In Germany, the cultural baggage of Wagner is *en-or-mous*. Any German audience knows about the association of his music with Hitler. The operas always reverberate with that history. One

of the reasons I accepted this Covent Garden Ring is because it enables me, with a non-German audience, to concentrate on other things: on the redemptive power of love and the brilliance of the narrative. Do I believe Wagner anticipated the Third Reich? No, I do not. Do I believe there are elements in Wagner's life and work that are deeply problematic and contradictory and unpleasant? Yes, I absolutely do."

A disturbing aspect of Die Walküre is the incest between the twins, Siegmund and Sieglinde, which results in the birth of the cycle's hero, Siegfried. As Kosky points out, in some ancient societies – the Incas, the Egyptians – incest was not taboo. "But Wagner is not interested in good or evil, or in the norms of Christian morality. He was driven to explore mythic, primal impulses. In these sibling-lovers, he creates two of the most sympathetic characters in any of his works."

But at the same time you cannot escape the idea of pure blood, of race, of eugenics. For Wagner, the greatest of all dramas was Aeschylus's Agamemnon, the first play in the Oresteia trilogy in which the brother-sister relationship is key. Greek drama shapes Wagner even more than Nordic myth. The orchestra acts as the chorus, commenting with leitmotifs, the musical themes used by Wagner to suggest particular characters.

AS A TRAINED PIANIST, Kosky is among those few directors able to steep themselves fully in the score. His joy at working alongside Antonio Pappano, former music director of the Royal Opera who is returning to conduct the successive operas in the Ring, is touching. "His assistant remarked: 'Tony is a conductor who occasionally directs and Barrie is a director who occasionally conducts in the rehearsal,' because I throw myself around all the time and jig my shoulders to the music. Tony's sense of humour is almost as wicked as mine. We giggle helplessly even though there are definitely no jokes in Walküre. He is a genius musician. I adore everything about this man. He breathes with the stage. You feel it physically. Everyone knows where this inhalation and exhalation is, so all are breathing as one. It's the rarest gift. It's what Tony does better than anyone I've ever worked with."

Kosky gives a rush of observations about the state and profile of opera: no, he cannot judge, as yet, whether the rise of the political "alt-right" in Germany has made any impact. Yes, opera ticket prices, despite efforts by opera houses, are still too high, but outside first nights you get different audiences, who save up and are addicted to an art form that combines everything: singing, dance, sculpture, literature, painting. Prices are still less than people pay for a Lady Gaga gig or a top sporting event, "and this Die Walküre sold out within a fortnight".

Berlin, he notes, even after a reduction, still has arts funding of nearly €1bn ($1.1bn), for a city of fewer than 4m people, "which is unthinkable to someone like you from England or me from Australia". He reveres the tradition of opera in the UK, saying: "Britain has produced some

> ***"Wagner isn't interested in good or evil. He was driven to explore mythic, primal impulses***

◀ Face the music Kosky in rehearsals for Die Walküre
TRISTRAM KENTON

of the greatest singers, conductors, directors in the world. But there's an Anglo-Saxon tendency to feel guilty about enjoying opera. In Germany and central Europe, it's part of the DNA." He remains evangelical about the value of the arts in nourishing the soul. "I don't expect politicians to get that. But we need to line up our arguments better about the economic value of the arts."

For Kosky the return to the Royal Opera has an element of private odyssey. His Hungarian-English grandfather had a fruit and vegetable stall in Covent Garden. "I find it very moving to walk through that site every day and think: 'This is where Jo Fischer sold fruit and veg.' That part of the family was involved in Yiddish theatre in the East End. One uncle was a clown, the other a composer. I still have his manuscripts in my apartment in Berlin."

In Kosky's view, that other family – the god Wotan, his Valkyrie daughters and other complicated offspring – is a visceral microcosm of us all. "You need know nothing about Nordic myth or Wagner's antisemitism or Hitler's abuse of the music," he says, "because you are sitting there, on the edge of your seat, wanting to know what happens next." He is still talking at top speed as he hurries off to the rehearsal room.

FIONA MADDOCKS IS A MUSIC CRITIC AND AUTHOR

Die Walküre is at the Royal Opera House, London, to 17 May, and is live in UK cinemas on 14 May

▼ Heaven scent A scene from the 2016 production of The Nose at the Royal Opera House
TRISTRAM KENTON

EXHIBITION

A journey through Von Trier's dark universe

Colliding planets, women in peril and an angry phone-in host ... a show inspired by the director's themes refuses to shy away from his problematic side

By *Miranda Bryant*

I am not even inside the building but a creeping sense of foreboding has already set in. As I try to find the entrance to Nikolaj Kunsthal, a gothic-style former church in Copenhagen, I hear the lamenting strings of Wagner's Tristan und Isolde – the soundtrack to Lars von Trier's 2011 end-of-the-world film Melancholia. Inside, I take a seat in a tent-like structure, similar to the one in the film, and watch as a planet hurtles towards Earth, Wagner still blasting away.

With the world still reeling from the arrival of Trump 2.0, and Europe at war amid increasing polarisation, looming AI takeover and the escalating climate emergency, the experience feels strangely current, but in other very important ways, Von Trier is deeply irrelevant in 2025. As well as attracting criticism for the treatment of women in his films, he has been involved in multiple scandals. Amid the rise of the #MeToo movement, musician and actor Björk, who starred in his 2000 musical film Dancer in the Dark, said he sexually harassed her during its making, claims he has denied.

Despite this, the exhibition has attracted huge interest, with record numbers at the opening – 2,000 in three hours – including younger generations. Why? "Lars von Trier is such a strong film-maker with such a strong aesthetic sense that he could be a visual artist," says Helene Nyborg Bay who curated Breaking Darkness, the Von Trier exhibition. Despite the controversies, she believes that Von Trier's work and its themes – love and despair, good and evil, faith and human choice – have a lot to offer.

Clips from the films have been combined with designs and installations to recreate the themes and moods of five films made between 1991 and 2011: Melancholia, Europa, Dancer in the Dark, Breaking the Waves and Dogville.

Bay invited young designers to interpret the "universe of Lars von Trier" in such a way as to create an experience that does not depend on the viewer having seen his films – including the generations that she believes have "abandoned" him.

Von Trier, who has Parkinson's disease and is now in a care centre, has not been directly involved, but he has given the exhibition his blessing. He attended the opening night on FaceTime with the help of his ex-wife. And, during this launch, Bay noticed a group of producers from Zentropa, his production company, sitting in the shelter in front of the oncoming planet.

Unusually, the exhibition also features a critique of the film-maker and his work, by Sofie Riise Nors, a Danish feminist satirical graphic novelist, who has accused him of romanticising and fetishising femicide, while criticising his artist-muse relationships. In a comic strip piece about Von Trier, created for the exhibition, Riise Nors appears as a radio host doing a phone-in about the director and explaining her problems with him. She questions the notion that he creates "strong female characters" and accuses him of using women's lives as a "kind of currency". She also mentions Björk's #MeToo accusations.

"His characters," this host says, "seem more like a mirror for his own fantasies about women than they are a mirror for female identification." She describes Melancholia – which has an "iconic" scene showing Kirsten Dunst and Charlotte Gainsbourg being pulverised by a planetary collision – as an example of "Von Trier's penchant for staging women's deaths in an artistic and aesthetic way". She also cites Björk's Dancer in the Dark character Selma, who bursts into song at her execution. It is also worth reminding ourselves that Nicole Kidman gets chained to a giant metal wheel in Dogville, while Gainsbourg cuts off her clitoris in Antichrist.

Could this two-pronged approach, celebration and criticism, provide a model for dealing with the work of more cancelled artists whose work is still deemed worthy of appreciation? Bay says that, even though Von Trier and Riise Nors have wildly different opinions, they share a capacity for self-reflection. "In that way, it's also a starting point for talk and for conversation."

Riise Nors isn't so sure. "The fact that we are still creating celebratory exhibitions about Lars von Trier is testimony to the fact that he was never really cancelled – at least not in Denmark." She thinks the country holds on to such a "morally questionable" figure because of his huge international success and would have liked to have seen more critical contributions in the exhibition. "You can still be a great artist," she adds, "and very problematic at the same time."

MIRANDA BRYANT IS THE GUARDIAN'S NORDIC CORRESPONDENT

Breaking Darkness is at Nikolaj Kunsthal, Copenhagen, until 27 July

▼ Clock on
Artwork inspired by 1991's Europa
MADS HOLM

May the force be with you

Not so long ago people would be excited by a new Star Wars show or Lord of the Rings saga squeezed on to the small screen. The faintest whisper of the forthcoming Harry Potter series would have set the internet ablaze. Now some of the most untouchable franchises are in trouble. Luke Holland *asks, is there any route back for them?*

Harry Potter **The problem: even more Potter? You cannot be Sirius**

Since HBO announced its new, apparently very exciting and definitely necessary adaptation of JK Rowling's books, starring John Lithgow as Dumbledore, Paapa Essiedu as Snape and Nick Frost as Hagrid, reaction has been more muted than was perhaps hoped. Despite that excellent cast, and even putting aside the author's own personal journey from Hufflepuff to Slytherin, it isn't hard to see why. Since the film series ended in 2011, we've had three Fantastic Beasts movies, a perennial stage play, more video games than you can waggle a Horcrux at, a cartoon series and, for reasons no one adequately explained, a baking show. If there is to be a tipping point that sends the wobbly house of cards toppling over for good, a pointless TV reboot could be it.

The solution: a transmogrify spell!

In order to justify its own existence, Potter the series needs to be recklessly brave, utterly unrecognisable from that which came before. Imagine a full-blown supernatural horror, set in the scariest haunted house imaginable: a creepy old school in which Dick Solomon from Third Rock from the Sun has a distressingly large beard. Every episode should be directed by a different horror auteur. Children may be traumatised. This could prove to be a costly failure. But imagine if it wasn't. *Imagine it.*

Star Wars **The problem: it finds your lack of faith disturbing**

After Disney splashed $4.05bn on the brand in 2012, it was clear that it would need to milk that cash cow for every last drop. And lo, after five rushed-out movies came a slew of TV shows: The Mandalorian, Ahsoka, The Acolyte, The Book of Boba Fett, Skeleton Crew, Obi-Wan Kenobi, Andor – and those were just the live-action ones. If you were a card-carrying Star Wars nerd, this was fantastic. But casual viewers were left baffled. The Acolyte was swiftly cancelled amid an unedifying if sadly predictable flurry of racism and misogyny directed at its lead, Amandla Stenberg; then Skeleton Crew debuted to even worse ratings. Beyond Andor's second and final season, which if it's even half as good as the first will still be essential viewing, everyone's got a very bad feeling about this.

The solution: go far, far away

Even Star Wars' biggest devotees must admit that the brand needs to be rested. And when it comes back, it cannot continue to demand that audiences have a PhD in advanced convention attendance to understand who everybody is. Disney needs to operate a strict policy of one show at a time, and pour every resource into it; a new, accessible, unmissable story. No more prequels. No more reliance on esoteric lore. Make something good and people will come: Band of Brothers in space; Natasha Lyonne as a wisecracking podracer; Breaking Bad but with strung-out Ewoks – it really isn't that hard.

▼ Lost magic Reaction to a Harry Potter reboot has been muted despite a stellar cast

MURRAY CLOSE/ WARNER BROS

The Lord of the Rings

The problem: it's as dull as Bilbo's butterknife

When the prequel to The Lord of the Rings, The Rings of Power, debuted in 2022, opinion was divided between "spectacular, just wow" and "so dull it made all my children cry". Both opinions were correct. None of this was helped by accents that were somehow equally offensive to hobbits and the Irish, and the unavoidable influence of "prequelitis", the tension-robbing knowledge of who lives and who dies – so really, who cares what happens? Last year's action-packed second season was an improvement, but by then the damage was done: reports put the drop-off in viewership between the first and second seasons at an eye-watering 60%. At $50m an episode, this isn't a trend even Amazon can sustain for long. Something has to give.

▲ Under siege Morfydd Clark in The Rings of Power (left) for which viewing figures have reportedly fallen by 60%, and Diego Luna in Andor, one of may Star Wars spin-offs

AMAZON; LUCASFILM/AP

> ***"Opinion was divided between 'just wow' and 'so dull it made my children cry'***

The solution: reforge The Rings of Power
Plenty of shows, from The Office to Parks and Recreation, went on to thrive after a duff first season. They did, however, hit the ground running in season two in a way The Rings of Power didn't. What's required here is a soft reboot. Keep the cast, characters and broad narrative of The Rings of Power, but change the name to something cool and pitch the third season as a new(ish) tale that requires no prior knowledge. Thrust newcomers headlong into a battle between good and evil. Make this "new" show propulsive and addictive, and boom: you've got the world's first $1bn sleeper hit.

Game of Thrones The problem: Westeros? More like Westerozzzzzz
No need for a spoiler alert regarding events of season two of Thrones spin-off House of the Dragon, because there weren't any. A family, all of whom have identical hair and the same name, talk about going to war with another family, all of whom have identical hair and the same name. A dragon committed fratricide. Matt Smith had some dreams. That's it.

▼ **Slow burner** Matt Smith in House of the Dragon HBO

The solution: reclaim the water cooler
The original Thrones was essential appointment TV, the likes of which we may never see again. The Red Wedding blew minds. Spoilers ended lifelong friendships. House of the Dragon is a decent fantasy drama, nothing more. It's too far gone to turn things around on its own. There's another spin-off due later this year – A Knight of the Seven Kingdoms – and it's this that bears the weight of the entire Thrones brand on its shoulders. If it can somehow rebottle the lightning that made the series a global smash – Deaths! Surprises! *Things actually happening!* – it could restoke the fire in the bellies of millions of lapsed Westeros obsessives. It is, however, based on a series of novellas called Tales of Dunk and Egg. Things aren't looking promising, to be honest.
LUKE HOLLAND IS A FEATURES WRITER

MUSIC

A Complicated Woman
Self Esteem, Polydor
★★★☆☆

Since 2017, Self Esteem – Rebecca Lucy Taylor – has reinvented herself, from one half of indie duo Slow Club into an on-her-own-terms pop star. Her second album as Self Esteem, 2021's Prioritise Pleasure, was a critical and commercial success. She also has a burgeoning career as an actor. Her success has meant that, on Prioritise Pleasure's follow-up, she was afforded a recording budget sufficient to do what she always wanted: grand ambitions involving choirs and orchestras.

The music on A Complicated Woman reaches for feelgood stadium singalongs, evokes sweaty dancefloors and aims itself at the centre of mainstream pop. There are moments where the lyrics match the sound. But for the most part, the songs thrash about and contradict themselves as if Taylor is working out exactly how she feels about ageing, drinking or her career. This approach sometimes feels brave and fascinating. But sometimes it feels confusingly opaque.

A Complicated Woman is a bold experiment that you couldn't call a failure, but doesn't always come off with the efficacy Taylor might have hoped. *Alexis Petridis*

TELEVISION

Étoile
Prime Video
★★★☆☆

The setup of this new venture from Gilmore Girls and The Marvelous Mrs Maisel creators Amy Sherman-Palladino and Daniel Palladino is simple. Two dance companies – Le Ballet National in Paris and the Metropolitan Ballet Theatre in New York City – are struggling after Covid and other modern pressures. So what if they swapped their top dancers and choreographers and launched a publicity campaign so everyone abandoned YouTube and became interested in ballet instead?

The head of the French company, Geneviève (Charlotte Gainsbourg, jarringly unconvincing in her first television role) has already secured funding for the project. All she needs is for her former lover and head of the New York company, Jack (Luke Kirby), to agree, even though the money is coming from a man he despises – arms and chemicals manufacturer Crispin Shamblee (Simon Callow, giving his Four Weddings and a Funeral turn an evil billionaire twist).

The big draw is star ballerina Cheyenne Toussaint (Lou de Laâge). She is feisty, of course, and an ecowarrior in her spare time.

Étoile is … fine. It passes the time. But every person seems to be acting in a slightly different show from everyone else, and tonally it falls between any and every possible stool. There is a scattering of jokes per episode but it is not funny enough to be a comedy, not dramatic enough to be a drama, or frothy enough to be a soap. Occasionally, it seems to be aiming for satire but the barbs are blunt.

Étoile may be a show about dancers, but it urgently needs to find its feet. *Lucy Mangan*

Podcast of the week *Chasing the Sound*
Kirk Flash brings evocative storytelling skills to this series about music scenes across the globe, each journey prompted by one of his favourite songs. Episode one digs into the styles challenging Bollywood supremacy in India; later instalments cover Moroccan dance music and the precise nature of London cool. *Rachel Aroesti*

ILLUSTRATION BY ELIA BARBIERI

THE BIG IDEA

Can scientists create life in labs?

Intriguing advances hold out the possibility – but first we must agree on what 'life' means

By *Philip Ball*

"Creation of Life," read the headline of the Boston Herald in 1899. "Lower Animals Produced by Chemical Means." The report described the work of the German-American marine biologist Jacques Loeb, who later wrote: "The idea is now hovering before me that man himself can act as a creator, even in living nature."

In fact, Loeb had merely made an unfertilised sea urchin egg divide by exposing it to a mixture of salts – he was not even close to creating life in the lab. No scientist has ever done that. But that dream hovers today over the discipline called synthetic biology, the very name of which seems to promise the creation of artificial life forms. Take one of the most dramatic results in this field: in 2010, scientists at the J Craig Venter Institutes in Maryland and California announced they had made "the first self-replicating synthetic bacterial cell".

This wasn't, however, truly the creation of life either, but rather, a particularly bravura (or scary, depending on your viewpoint) example of genetic engineering. The team had produced a bacterium of a species found in nature, but with DNA that the scientists had assembled in the laboratory using chemical methods, modified to their own design.

To truly make a living thing from scratch is another matter entirely. Can we create life afresh from its basic, nonliving components? Some scientists are attempting it – last year researchers in the US and Europe reported a "roadmap" to, as they put it, "achieve the vision of building cells from molecular parts".

All life forms on Earth share the same chemical ingredients: DNA for encoding the hereditary messages of the genes, protein for making the enzymes that enable the chemical processes of life, lipids to make cell membranes, and so on. And all living things are composed of individual cells, which are inherently alive in themselves. So if we were to make versions of all these molecules using chemistry alone and somehow assembled them into a cell, would we be creating life?

It's a moot point, because we can't even do that. Cells won't just assemble themselves from all their molecular components mixed together in a test tube – they are far too complicated. Every cell that ever existed was made by the division of an earlier cell. As Rudolf Virchow, the German physiologist who helped promote cell theory in the 19th century, put it: "Every cell comes from a cell."

You've doubtless spotted the flaw here, which is that it had to start somewhere. Where did the first cell come from? How did life originate? There is no shortage of theories. In 1953, two scientists at the University of Chicago tested one of these – that life arose from a primordial soup of chemicals in the early oceans – by making amino acids (the chemical ingredients of protein) from mixtures of water, hydrogen, methane and ammonia. Time magazine claimed the experiment had come close to creating a "living molecule".

However life started, it almost certainly wouldn't have cohered all at once: increasingly complicated chemical entities must have developed from simpler ones. But the mere fact that life appeared at all on a planet that was once little more than rock, water and simple molecular gases in the atmosphere shows us that making life from scratch must be possible.

Some parts of cells do assemble themselves. In particular the lipid molecules of our cell membranes will gather together into hollow cell-like sacs in water to shield their fatty parts. Researchers in the Netherlands are trying to construct a kind of miniature assembly line for loading such lipid bubbles with proteins. But there's no reason why DNA, proteins and the rest would spontaneously arrange themselves into the positions they adopt in living cells. We have no idea how one might get all these parts to organise into something alive.

Yet wouldn't it anyway be rather unimaginative simply to create life in our own image (or that of a bacterium)? Why not make it instead from totally different molecular components?

What this really comes down to is the fact that scientists don't even agree on what "life" means in the first place. Some researchers argue that computer-based "artificial life" – algorithms that can make copies of themselves, or that produce patterns that crawl across the screen – fit the criteria for being genuinely alive. Last year, researchers at Google described how computer programs that replicate themselves emerged spontaneously from non-replicating ones when they had the ability to join and split. Group leader Blaise Agüera y Arcas argued that this "synthetic life is no different to natural life".

But that sets a very low bar. For me, "created life" has to be able to, at least metaphorically, crawl out of the test tube. If that prospect appals you, fear not: scientists aren't even close to doing it. They barely understand the question.

PHILIP BALL IS A SCIENCE WRITER

FURTHER READING

Three books for a deeper dive

- **Life's Edge**
  By Carl Zimmer
- **Life As No One Knows It**
  By Sara Imari Walker
- **Synthetic Biology**
  By Jamie A Davies

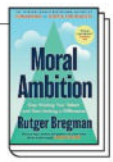
PHILOSOPHY

Do the right thing

Rallying cry challenges those with the ability to go out and make the world a better place

By *Rowan Williams*

Book of the week
Moral Ambition
By Rutger Bregman



"This is not a self-help book," the author tells us, firmly. Appearances might suggest otherwise: it is written and presented almost entirely in the familiar style of that genre, with largish print, short sentences, snappy maxims in italics and lots of lists and charts ("six signs you may be on the wrong side of history").

But it is worth taking Bregman, a thirtysomething historian and author labelled "one of Europe's most prominent young thinkers" by the Ted network, at his word. He begins from the deep and corrosive anomie experienced by so many gifted young professionals who find themselves making substantial sums of money in exhausting and (at best) morally compromising jobs. The "moral ambition" of the title is about recognising that serious financial, organisational, technological and analytical skills - the kind that in the US will get you through, say, law school with a secure ticket to prosperity - can be used to make tangible improvements in the lives of human and nonhuman neighbours.

For this to happen, we need vivid, granular narratives of how, in the past, this has become not just a possibility but an urgent imperative. In Nazi-occupied France and the Netherlands, who exactly sheltered Jews and why? In the 20th-century US, who named and shamed the naked abuses of corporate power? In the 18th century, how did the campaign to end the slave trade gain traction so decisively within a relatively short period of time?

The stories that Bregman tells are vivid and often genuinely inspiring. He has some judiciously positive things to say about the tangles of the "effective altruism" movement (much tarnished by the association with it of problematic figures such as Sam Bankman-Fried). The one-note emphasis on maximising measurable effectiveness encouraged the idea that you could do the maximum amount of good by making the maximum amount of money so that you could give it all away. The effect of this was, for some, a dead end - discussing endlessly what you might do if you were even richer. There is nothing morally superior about inefficiency, and no alibi for ineffectiveness to be found in good intentions. Bregman has stringent and necessary things to say about the myth of the "noble loser", as he neatly christens it, in which purity of motive outweighs actual delivery. "Winning" is a moral imperative, and accountability is essential.

And accountability requires at least two critical habits. One is simply to take the trouble to find out what the problem is, especially from those who experience it firsthand. The other, more challengingly, is to beware of those varieties of purism and maximalism that make it impossible either to construct serious long-term strategies for policymaking, or to make tactical alliances with those who don't necessarily share every detail of your convictions.

The developing awareness of intersectionality - the interwoven nature of a wide variety of factors that inhibit human dignity and freedoms - has been a genuinely important aspect of recent thinking about what justice might mean. Ultimately, talking about the emancipation of one group will and should lead you to see that you have to link it to the emancipation of other groups. But the danger, Bregman argues, is that you may end up refusing to work with anyone who does not sign up to a formidable and ever-expanding list of supposedly interconnected orthodoxies, a moral package-deal in which you can't begin to act on one issue unless all the other bases are secured, and in which no one can be a genuine ally without acknowledging every article of the creed. It is a pseudo-religious attitude that leads inexorably to division.

As a corrective, Bregman describes a number of successful movements that have thought seriously about necessary tactical compromises and the acceptance of delay in order to arrive at a more secure if less dramatic outcome - from the abolitionist movement to the Montgomery bus boycott of 1955.

But this story and others illustrate a tension that Bregman never quite resolves - and which perhaps doesn't lend itself to resolution. His appeal is very much to the high-flyer, looking for a cause that will give the fullest moral satisfaction; and there are pages where some readers at least will be tempted to mutter about white saviourism. Because the book is pitched so strongly towards the young and gifted, there is a lot of emphasis on achievement and satisfaction - but the book as a whole probes more deeply, aware of the risks of self-dramatising.

Which is why it is indeed more than a self-help manual. It may be more optimistic than current global trends seem to warrant; it may be a bit thin on how you sustain the moral ambition it prescribes. But at its best it offers a bracingly hopeful perspective. As he notes at the very end of the book, believing that individuals can't make a difference is paradoxically a deeply individualistic conviction, a refusal to see the interwovenness of human agency. Oversimplified? Perhaps. But calls to arms often have to be.

ROWAN WILLIAMS IS A FORMER ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY

Audio book of the week
All Fours
By Miranda July

In the second novel by the writer, actor and filmmaker, a nameless LA-based artist leaves her husband and their child to drive across America. She is due at a meeting in New York and has decided to get there via a leisurely road trip. But what starts as a fleeting break from mundanity of marriage and motherhood turns into a wild and wonderfully odd unravelling as she pursues a young car hire worker in an unusually chaste love affair. Narrated by July, this pacy, hypnotic reading skilfully evokes the internal monologue of her protagonist.
Fiona Sturges

FICTION

Sacred hearts

A poet's debut novel explores first love and pays homage to English literary tradition

By *Sarah Perry*

Open, Heaven
By Seán Hewitt

Seán Hewitt, the author of two acclaimed poetry collections and an equally acclaimed memoir, now publishes his debut novel Open, Heaven - a tender, skilled and epiphanic work that I suspect will meet the same response. It takes its title from William Blake's poem

Milton, which speaks of wandering through "realms of terror and mild moony lustre, in soft sexual delusions of varied beauty" – a line that describes the reader's experience of this book.

Our narrator, James, a librarian who loved but never desired his husband, is a man arrested in time past. Directed by doctors to rest after the "bewildered weeks" that follow his divorce, he returns to thoughts of his youth, "hoping to find the answer to something left unfinished". He searches online for properties in the village of Thornmere, where he was once a solitary teen who loved a boy called Luke. He discovers a farmhouse for sale, and is prompted to return to Thornmere in person, having never really departed it in spirit.

Now it is 2002, and young James is shy and sullen, earning pocket money on a milk round, while negotiating his sexuality and his attachment to his parents, and to a little brother prone to frightening seizures. One autumn morning while delivering milk, he encounters Luke seated on a pile of sacks and flicking ash from a cigarette. His questing and troublesome need for the company and desire of men has found its apotheosis: his life becomes one of "soft sexual delusions", as his friendship with Luke becomes increasingly intimate and complex.

I was arrested by the presentation of a version of Englishness that is perhaps best arrived at by some remove. Hewitt was born in Warrington, but lives and teaches in Dublin; his mother is Irish. There is consequently a sensibility at work here that is intricately familiar with and fond of a particular kind of Englishness, which in clumsier hands might appear trite. There are sparrow-scattered hedges, horse chestnuts, rugby clubs, bonfires, farmhouses with patterned china on the dresser, and boys fishing for perch in the canal – all of this treated without the embarrassment that might plague a British novelist, and offset with equally English images of desolate underpasses beneath main roads, or of loose tarpaulin flapping on a half-derelict barn.

In both his poetry and prose, Hewitt is working, with immense fidelity and skill, towards a singular vision, in which sincerity of feeling – and the treatment of sexual desire as something close to sacred – is matched with an almost reckless beauty of expression. What is that, if not bravery?

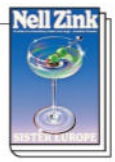
SARAH PERRY IS AN ENGLISH NOVELIST

FICTION

Identity politics

This comedy of manners is a prescient interrogation of language and power

By *Rita Bullwinkel*



Sister Europe
By Nell Zink

On 7 March 2025, the New York Times published a list of words the Trump administration was systematically culling from government documents and educational materials. This list, which includes the words "gender ideology", "affirming care", "ethnicity", "identity", "racism", "political", "intersectional" and "privilege", reads like a bingo card for Nell Zink's astonishingly prescient Sister Europe, in which a large cast of racially, economically and gender-diverse characters convene over the course of a single evening to attend a literary awards ceremony in Berlin.

On its surface, Sister Europe is a comedy of manners set among Berlin's exclusive and elusive cultural elite. The prose is searingly quick, revelatory and funny. Entertaining banter could be this book's largest trophy, were it not for the contents of the banter, which make clear that Zink is one of our most important contemporary writers.

Zink endows each of her characters with both moral high grounds and glaring blind spots. In Sister Europe, as in life, who is the oppressed and who is the oppressor is not fixed. The ever-shifting flow of social and sexual power between the characters is nerve-racking and tantalising: there are no saints and no demons.

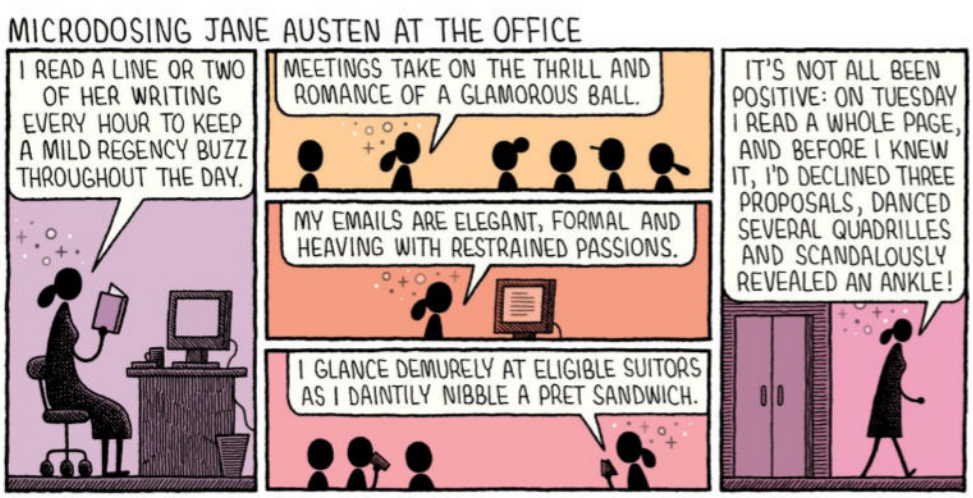
Though her work is rarely discussed in the context of politics, Zink is one of our most ambitious and explicitly political writers. Here she shows us that the Trump administration's embargoed words are not weapons, but questions. Nothing is more dangerous to a dictator than someone who can anticipate, and therefore interrogate, their actions. Sister Europe performs an intellectually rigorous interrogation of the ideas the Trump administration deems most dangerous.

While this is a novel of ideas, the narrative is never cold or cerebral. It's beautifully felt and emotionally open-handed. I wanted love and joy for each of the 13 main characters, which the book delivers. It is not a rejection of identity politics, but a plea for the possibility of an evolving self; a bid against inner stagnancy. Like Erasure by Percival Everett, Sister Europe addresses the claustrophobia that can accompany an identity. No character, real or imagined, enjoys being flattened.

RITA BULLWINKEL IS AN AMERICAN AUTHOR

What we've been reading
Writers and readers on their favourite recent books

TOM GAULD


MICRODOSING JANE AUSTEN AT THE OFFICE
I READ A LINE OR TWO OF HER WRITING EVERY HOUR TO KEEP A MILD REGENCY BUZZ THROUGHOUT THE DAY.
MEETINGS TAKE ON THE THRILL AND ROMANCE OF A GLAMOROUS BALL.
MY EMAILS ARE ELEGANT, FORMAL AND HEAVING WITH RESTRAINED PASSIONS.
I GLANCE DEMURELY AT ELIGIBLE SUITORS AS I DAINTILY NIBBLE A PRET SANDWICH.
IT'S NOT ALL BEEN POSITIVE: ON TUESDAY I READ A WHOLE PAGE, AND BEFORE I KNEW IT, I'D DECLINED THREE PROPOSALS, DANCED SEVERAL QUADRILLES AND SCANDALOUSLY REVEALED AN ANKLE!

ASK
Annalisa Barbieri

Why won't my struggling pals come to live with me?

I'm in the fortunate position of owning my own home and some land without a mortgage (in a very affordable and somewhat remote area), and every week I hear more stories from friends about their struggles to get by. We're all in our 30s, but I feel as if my stress levels are infinitely lower than theirs. I've offered to let people stay rent-free so they can save for a house, or even put a mobile home on the land. But I feel I'm barely making a difference.

I know it sucks to ask for help, especially from friends, and it is looked down on.

Do you have any suggestions for how I could share the perks I enjoy with my friends and lighten their load a little bit, without a sense of shame or failure accompanying that for them?

It's wonderful that you want to help your friends. But I wonder if they're less worried about feeling shame and more about the potential loss of satisfaction at making it on their own.

I went to psychotherapist Chris Mills with your letter. "Your wish to share your resources and good fortune is very touching," he said. "The offers you're making sound heartfelt and generous, but when you say 'I feel I'm barely making a difference,' I'm assuming you mean that these offers aren't being taken up, at least not as much as you'd hoped or expected."

If this is the case, Mills wondered if you "might be misreading some of the signs. Your friends may need support, but chances are they gain a sense of solidarity by being surrounded by others in the same boat, peers who share similar circumstances and aspirations for the future. What you're offering may seem more like a form of escape than support."

People don't want to be a burden – they want to feel they have achieved things under their own steam. Satisfaction, which I mentioned at the beginning of my answer, is the key to contentment. I tentatively wonder if you feel guilty about your house and land, and if so why that might be. Did you get what you have entirely through your own hard work, or have you had some lucky breaks? Great if so, but do you feel a bit guilty compared to your friends?

Mills also said: "You may already be a huge help to them by being a sympathetic ear. They might feel more at ease offloading their stresses on to you because you're slightly removed from what they're going through, and that their woes are less of a burden for you than friends going through similar things. So they may feel a whole lot happier after speaking to you, but you feel awful because their stresses have been transferred to you."

> ***"What you're offering may seem more like escape than support***

In time, your friends may catch up with you or their stress levels may lessen (or yours may increase, but I hope not). Unless they're actually homeless, your friends may also not want to take up offers of living on your land because it doesn't suit them, either because of where it is or other reasons, and that's their prerogative. Also, sometimes open-ended help can feel a bit too uncertain and taps into worries of being a burden.

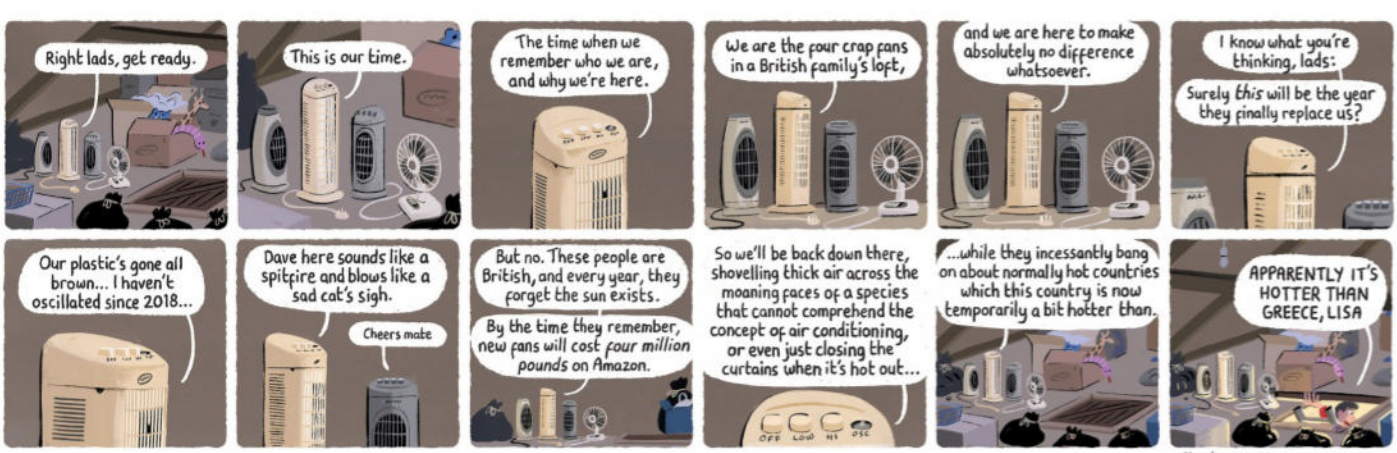
I wonder if it may feel more containing to say to friends: "Come for two weeks for a rest." It may not feel like much, but it could be really helpful to them.

Mills wondered if "a more effective way to help them could be to go and visit them, rather than waiting for them to visit you? Having a helpful friend around for a few days who has time to help could be a blessing."

Also, have you asked what help, if any, they want? Remember, if what you're offering is not what they need then it may not be helpful at all, however well-meaning.

If you would like advice on a family matter, email ask.annalisa@theguardian.com. See theguardian.com/letters-terms for terms and conditions

STEPHEN COLLINS


Right lads, get ready.
This is our time.
The time when we remember who we are, and why we're here.
We are the four crap fans in a British family's loft,
and we are here to make absolutely no difference whatsoever.
I know what you're thinking, lads:
Surely this will be the year they finally replace us?
Our plastic's gone all brown... I haven't oscillated since 2018...
Dave here sounds like a spitfire and blows like a sad cat's sigh.
Cheers mate
But no. These people are British, and every year, they forget the sun exists.
By the time they remember, new fans will cost four million pounds on Amazon.
So we'll be back down there, shovelling thick air across the moaning faces of a species that cannot comprehend the concept of air conditioning, or even just closing the curtains when it's hot out...
...while they incessantly bang on about normally hot countries which this country is now temporarily a bit hotter than.
APPARENTLY IT'S HOTTER THAN GREECE, LISA
Stephen Collins COLLILLO.COM

KITCHEN AIDE
By *Anna Berrill*

Dress to impress: sauce ideas to transform your dinners for good

What sauces and dressings can I make to jazz up weekday meals?

Sauces and dressings make even the simplest meals taste better. The formula, says Gurdeep Loyal, author of Flavour Heroes (published in June), is "a really good fat and a really good sour". That fat could be oil, but it doesn't have to be. "It could be an egg yolk, it could be avocado, but if it's oil, go for a flavoured one," Loyal says, and in place of vinegar or fresh citrus, try gherkins, capers or preserved citrus instead. "My go-tos are preserved lemon whizzed up with a bit of their brine, some garlic-infused olive oil and maple syrup. Or avocado blitzed with gherkins, gherkin brine, a bit of sugar and herbs such as chives or tarragon. Or chilli-infused olive oil blitzed with a teaspoon of tamarind."

For William Gleave, chef-patron of Sargasso in Margate, meanwhile: "Something with anchovies is always nice, because it goes with so many things." For him, a "classic stolen/borrowed from the River Cafe" comes out tops: "It's essentially a dressing with chopped anchovy, grated garlic, red-wine vinegar, lemon juice, oil, black pepper and chilli flakes," and it's bright, umami-rich and versatile.

Another shortcut to big flavour is zhoug, says Marc Summers, founder of Bubala in London. "Whizz up a load of herbs – coriander, parsley, mint – with oil, garlic and hawaij [a Yemeni spice blend with lots of black pepper, cumin and coriander]." That will transform meals in seconds.

Summers is also a big fan of crunches, especially when apricots are involved. "Make it as you would a chilli crunch, with lots of fried shallots, garlic and Sichuan peppercorns, then add hot oil, dried apricots and harissa for a really amazing, smoky-sweet oil." Drizzle over yoghurty roast carrots or blanch some noodles, add tahini and top with the crunch. And while the harissa's out, Summer suggests combining it with honey and using as a marinade for vegetables.

Tahini sauce, meanwhile, is Xanthe Ross's salvation. "It feels indulgent," says the author of Stay for Supper, "and it'll instantly jazz up roast veg and salads, or use it as a dip." You'll most likely have all the ingredients (tahini, lemon, olive oil, sometimes honey and water) knocking around, anyway. That said, you can't go far wrong with a classic vinaigrette, either, but mix up the vinegar element to keep things interesting. "It's hard to make in small quantities, so have a batch in the fridge for the week," she says. "That's good on so many things beyond a green salad, such as tomatoes on toast, although the French might hate me for saying so."

ANNA BERRILL IS A FOOD WRITER

Got a culinary dilemma? Email feast@theguardian.com

BREBCA/GETTY

THE WEEKLY RECIPE
By *Meera Sodha*

№315 Red rice salad with feta and molasses

Prep	10 min
Cook	25 min
Serves	4-6

● GLUTEN FREE

This is a great, low-effort spring evening meal in which the only "cooking" is boiling the green beans and rice. Camargue rice can be found pretty easily in larger supermarkets and online. If you can't get hold of any, you could replace it by black rice, which is sometimes called venere or forbidden rice.

Ingredients

½ red onion, very finely sliced
3 limes, squeezed to get roughly 5 tbsp juice
Fine sea salt
250g Camargue red rice
300g green beans, topped
400g tin cannellini beans, drained and rinsed
15g fresh dill, finely chopped
20g flat-leaf parsley, leaves picked and finely chopped
200g block feta – make sure it's a vegetarian one

For the dressing

4 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil
3 tbsp pomegranate molasses
1½ tbsp honey, or maple syrup
1 tsp sumac, plus a big pinch extra to finish

Method

Put the sliced onion in a small bowl, add a tablespoon of lime juice and a quarter-teaspoon of salt, then scrunch with your hands a few times and put to one side.

Wash the rice in a sieve under cold running water until the water runs clear, then put it in a large pot and add plenty of just-boiled water. Bring back to a boil, cook for 10 minutes, then add the green beans and cook for a further eight minutes, or until both the rice and beans are tender.

While the rice and beans are cooking, make the dressing. In an empty jam jar, combine the olive oil, pomegranate molasses, honey, sumac, the remaining lime juice and three-quarters of a teaspoon of salt, seal and give it all a good shake until emulsified.

Put the drained cannellini beans, cooked green beans, cooked rice and chopped herbs in a large bowl, drizzle over the dressing and give the mix a good toss until well coated.

Break the feta into chunks with your hands, scatter over the rice and lightly toss again. Tip out on to a platter, finish with the quick pickled onions and a sprinkle of sumac, and serve at room temperature.

Notes and Queries
The long-running series that invites readers to send in questions and answers on anything and everything

QUIZ
Thomas Eaton

1 Which father and son footballers both have more than 100 international caps?
2 In 1907, who opened her first classroom in Rome?
3 Which mythical beast had a human face, lion's body and scorpion's tail?
4 What becomes the Padma within Bangladesh?
5 Used in the 14th century, the *pot-de-fer* was an early type of what?
6 Whose work is sold and authenticated by the Pest Control Office?
7 Which African country is named from the Shona for "houses of stone"?

▲ Human face, lion's body and scorpion's tail, but what is it?
GRANGER/ALAMY

8 What list currently ends with oganesson?
What links:
9 Buckthorn bark; brazilwood; cochineal; madder; safflower?
10 Platypus (0); human (1); dolphin (2); ostrich (3); cattle (4)?
11 Brownie; Frankenstrat; Lucille; Red Special; Trigger?
12 Aktau; Baku; Makhachkala; Rasht; Türkmenbaşy?
13 Albert Square pub; Bombay Sapphire bottle; first postage stamp?
14 Big Bounce; Big Crunch; Big Freeze; Big Rip?
15 Asparagus; Burgh; Burrow; Lindisfarne; Mersea?

PUZZLES
Chris Maslanka

1 Wordpool
Find the correct definition:
BAMBOSH
a) a stooshie
b) plausible nonsense
c) self-important official
d) stew of leftovers

2 E pluribus unum
Rearrange *MONASTIC CAP* to make a single word.

3 Word Centre
Identify the word(s) in which each asterisk represents a missing letter:
REAR

4 Cryptic
Other possibility to change indigene (11)
Beast of burden put creature in suitcase (4, 6)
Water, if liquid dripping, or if ice falling on rock – reveals an opening (7)

© CMM2025

Answers
1 Peter and Kasper Schmeichel (Denmark). **2** Maria Montessori. **3** Manticore. **4** Ganges River. **5** Cannon. **6** Banksy. **7** Zimbabwe. **8** Periodic table of the elements. **9** Natural red dyes. **10** Number of stomachs (or stomach compartments). **11** Named guitars: Bonnie Raitt; Eddie Van Halen; BB King; Brian May; Willie Nelson. **12** Cities on the Caspian Sea: Kazakhstan; Azerbaijan; Russia; Iran; Turkmenistan. **13** Featured images of Queen Victoria. **14** Theories of the origin and fate of the universe. **15** Tidal islands in England: Cornwall; Devon; Hampshire; Northumberland; Essex.
1 Wordpool b). **2 EPU** ACCOMPANIST.
3 Word Centre FIREARMS, FOREARMS.
4 Cryptic ALTERNATIVE, PACK ANIMAL, ORIFICE.

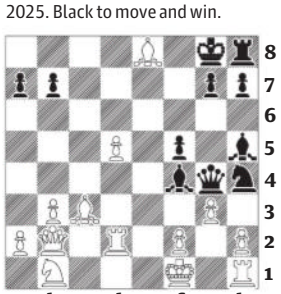
CHESS
Leonard Barden

Magnus Carlsen, the world No 1, soared to a new landmark in chess history last week, when the 34-year-old won all his nine games in the Grenke Freestyle Open at Karlsruhe, Germany.

It was a result comparable to the great historical performances. Bobby Fischer won the 1963-64 US Championship with an 11/11 "picket fence", then defeated both Mark Taimanov and Bent Larsen by 6-0 in the 1971 Candidates. Anatoly Karpov triumphed at Linares 1994 with an 11-2 total, while further back the yardstick performance was Alexander Alekhine's 14-1 at San Remo 1930.

However, Fide does not officially rate Freestyle chess, in which the back rank pieces have randomised starting positions.

3969 Lukas Leisch v Vincent Keymer, Grenke Freestyle Open 2025. Black to move and win.



Carlsen came direct to Grenke from the Paris leg of the Freestyle Grand Slam, and was fatigued by the two rounds a day schedule. His laconic post-victory comment was: "I'm not going to do that again, that's for sure!"

Just a day after Grenke, Carlsen won the late version of chess.com's online Titled Tuesday. However, he was upstaged in the early version, where the 13-year-old Turkish prodigy, Yağız Kaan Erdoğmuş, became the youngest ever winner of this highly competitive event.

3969 **1**...Qh3+ **2** Ke1 (**2** Kg1 Qg2 or Nf3 mate) Ng2+ **3** Kf1 Ne3++ **4** Ke1 Qf1+! **5** Rxf1 Ng2 mate.

COUNTRY DIARY
BODMIN
Cornwall, England, UK

Spring's threads are woven throughout the woodland: clutches of primroses, emerging bluebells and tightly wound fern fronds ready to unfurl. At the bases of trees, hazel dormice will still be hibernating, curled up among damp mosses and leaves, soft bodies dozing the last of the cold weather away.

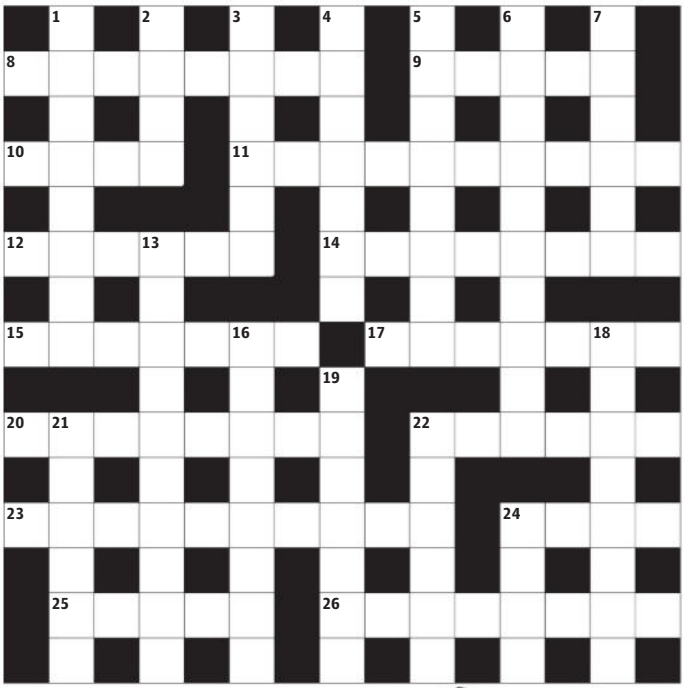
I meet the licensed ecologist Ellie Smart and trainee Peter Roseveare as they clean out last year's dormice nest boxes. Just over a century ago, hazel dormice were so prevalent that they were often kept in the pockets of Victorian schoolchildren – but populations have dropped 75% since 1996, primarily caused by the loss of appropriate woods and hedgerows.

Each box reveals a new secret: some are empty, some have velveteen moss rugs where tits have appropriated the space, others have signs of wood mice, and in one we disturb a little pygmy shrew. But the seventh box holds the best surprise: an old dormouse nest, a downy bundle that fits in the palm.

Breeding nests are typically made from honeysuckle or grass strands, which dormice separate by pulling them between their teeth, making them fine enough to interlace. The strands are rolled up and carried into nest spaces, then woven into a ball shape with a little entrance hole, before the dormice furnish the nests with bracken, tamarisk moss, green leaves and bark or bluebell leaves.

As we continue, hugging the riverside, we keep hoping for a glimpse of onyx eyes, golden-sand fur, or a fat, fluffy tail – but although we uncover three more old nests, none is harbouring a dormouse. The nest boxes may be empty now, but hopefully they will soon be filled with the squeaks of the next generation.
Alexandra Pearce-Broomhead

ILLUSTRATION: CLIFFORD HARPER



* All solutions published next week

The Weekly cryptic
No 29,675

By *Paul*

Across

8 Prime number heard fighting with indefinite number (8)
9 Clamour from attention seeker, case of someone beyond redemption, ultimately (5)
10 Fellah in deer? Not entirely! (4)
11 Our etching, though sketchy, improving (10)
12 Stuff lying around flat interminably, one hasn't quite grown up (6)
14 Surrender, wobbling one run short of century, ending on ninety-nine (8)
15 See 24 Across
17 Procedure on defining both possibilities for batter? (7)
20 Sin ends in tragedy, prophetic in month of Aquarius, say – the Water Carrier? (5,3)
22 Name associated with lectures announced award (6)
23 Cold Scottish island toured by a dog expert (10)
24/15 Cryptic clues for gags with sketch (4,7)
25 See 22 Down
26 Liquid starter from waitress, so doubled up, put in sketch? (3,5)

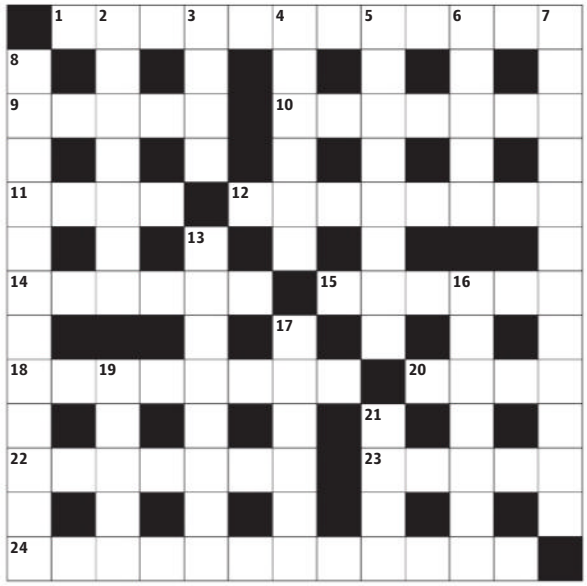
Down

1 Wee collected by clinician north of a Caribbean country (8)
2/3 Sketch very average, rubbish (4,6)
4 Base 17 yet to be delivered? (2,5)
5 Popular as might be spanking bottom, oh I say? Nudge, nudge, wink, wink! (8)
6 Use toilet humour at first comedically in basic sketch? (10)
7 Fox News in charge, toxic in the extreme (6)
13 Highlight when still a teenager? (10)
16 Coming or going round top of creek – as salmon might be? (2,6)
18 Possible call from male in rush, on getting up (2-6)
19 Find intimate in book without cover (7)
21 Heading for Exmoor, oxygen-fuelled females take a hike (3,3)
22/25 Western entertainer gets a grip of issue, something wooden in sketch? (4,2,5)
24 Sweet clown (4)

Solution No 29,669

S	I	S	A	L	■	R	A	I	N	C	L	O	U	D
U	■	I	■	E	■	E	■	R	■	O	■	R	■	U
D	E	M	A	G	O	G	U	E	■	M	A	P	L	E
O	■	P	■	■	■	E	■	L	■	M	■	H	■	L
K	I	L	I	M	A	N	J	A	R	O	■	E	E	L
U	■	E	■	A	■	T	■	N	■	N	■	U	■	E
S	P	R	U	C	E	S	■	D	I	S	U	S	E	D
■	■	■	■	H	■	■	■	■	■	E	■	■	■	■
H	A	W	K	I	S	H	■	J	O	N	E	S	E	S
A	■	I	■	A	■	A	■	O	■	S	■	M	■	U
M	O	T	■	V	A	M	P	I	R	E	B	A	T	S
M	■	H	■	E	■	B	■	N	■	■	■	R	■	P
O	C	T	A	L	■	U	N	S	H	E	A	T	H	E
C	■	H	■	L	■	R	■	U	■	G	■	I	■	C
K	E	E	P	I	N	G	U	P	■	G	R	E	A	T

Quick crossword
No 17,148



Across

1 Shade of a bird? (6,6)
9 Acclimatise (5)
10 High Renaissance great master (7)
11 In-and-out trend (4)
12 State and river (8)
14 Intensely hot or emotional (6)
15 Take first golf shot (3,3)
18 Moment of final confrontation (4,4)
20 Bluefin fish (4)
22 Attention-seeker's device? (7)
23 Central stage – or where one may be found (5)
24 Windbag (12)

Down

2 To shreds (7)
3 Hoary? (4)
4 Pungent medicinal herb known as old man's pepper (6)
5 Hireling (8)
6 Peruvian animal? (5)
7 Cold dish from a NY hotel? (7,5)
8 Talking talent (4,2,3,3)
13 Demonic (8)
16 Sumptuous (7)
17 Humdinger – one securing wine? (6)
19 Greek letter – of brain waves? (5)
21 Ruff – rough coating of tree (4)

Solution No 17,142

S	T	A	N	C	E	■	A	F	T	E	R	S		
T	■	M	■	R	■	■	■	O	■	A	■	A		
A	B	B	E	Y	■	A	E	R	O	S	O	L		
T	■	I	■	P	■	N	■	M	■	E	■	A		
I	N	E	R	T	I	A	■	U	N	D	E	R		
C	■	N	■	■	■	R	■	L	■	■	■	Y		
■	■	T	R	E	N	C	H	A	N	T	■	■		
A	■	■	■	N	■	H	■	■	■	O	■	S		
M	U	S	I	C	■	I	M	M	O	R	A	L		
O	■	P	■	L	■	S	■	A	■	N	■	U		
E	A	R	W	O	R	M	■	S	T	A	I	D		
B	■	I	■	S	■	■	■	O	■	D	■	G		
A	N	G	L	E	R	■	I	N	C	O	M	E		

Sudoku
Easy

Fill in the grid so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the numbers 1 to 9.

Last week's solution

5	3	2	8	7	6	9	4	1
7	9	6	4	1	3	8	5	2
4	8	1	9	2	5	6	7	3
8	7	5	2	3	1	4	6	9
1	6	3	7	4	9	2	8	5
9	2	4	5	6	8	3	1	7
3	5	8	6	9	7	1	2	4
2	1	7	3	8	4	5	9	6
6	4	9	1	5	2	7	3	8

								4
4		1	6	9		2		
	7			8	5	1		
1	9			6	3			5
3	6			7	4			2
	4			3	6	8		
6		9	5	4		7		
								1

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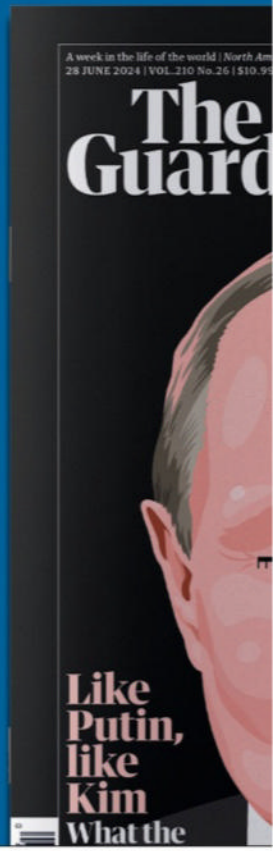

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